

**Creative Response-A New Look at Archiving:
The Role Artists Play in Developing Creative Response from Field
Recordings of Ethnographic Research**

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I. Abstract

In this work I query traditional ethnographic approaches to the preservation of heritage and culture whereby an ethnographer enters a community to carry out research, thus running the risk of folklorizing particular cultural practices. Academic documentation of a community, while of course valuable, may tend to isolate certain practices, freeze archival documentation in time, and miss the natural and vital evolution of heritage that changes organically over time. I argue that instead of entering a community solely as an “expert” intent on collecting and recording data, ethnographers should also consider the value of observing how a target community, in creative dialogue with the ethnographer, chooses to engage with cultural material and practices in a contemporary and dynamic way.

Thus, the research and material of cultural heritage gathered for an archive includes not only traditional documentation of cultural practices but also the way the community chooses to represent their practices to those outside the community, through the process of creative response. In this way, ethnographers and artists can work with target communities to create a type of preservation that acknowledges nuanced details of the community, their interactions, intergenerational dynamics, and the impact of the evolution of the community in the context of the changing landscape and climate of the world around it. This approach to ethnographic research and documentation moves away from traditional observation-based preservation and toward an approach that engages a community in their own preservation.

Specifically I am interested in the emerging area of digital media studies, and the relationship between sound studies, archiving, and digital ethnography. I explore the separation between practice and theory in the academy, and propose a paradigm that presumes there is a benefit from unifying these two areas. Through the exploration of new approaches to archiving rooted in emerging forms of communication and expression through digital media—a practice critical to scholarly research—I consider the value of including in the archive a creative human response to cultural heritage, which is rooted in the transformation of cultural artifacts and materials. Finally, I discuss ways in which creative response can build upon and contribute to a discourse in digital media studies—a framework that attempts to mediate the intersectionality of ethnography and sound studies while considering the possible contributions to the archive, activism, and collaboration that stem from this hybrid research.

II. Resumo

Este trabalho questiona a tradicional abordagem etnográfica na sua missão de preservação do património cultural, em particular quanto ao papel do etnógrafo, da sua relação com a comunidade que estuda e o risco de folclorização de algumas práticas culturais. O formato académico tradicional de documentação das práticas culturais de uma comunidade pode, não obstante o seu valor, tender a isolar estas práticas num período limitado de tempo, cristalizando-as e perdendo o contacto com a sua natural evolução ao longo do tempo. Propomos que a observação do modo como uma comunidade escolhe interagir com materiais e práticas culturais de uma forma dinâmica e em diálogo criativo com o etnógrafo poderá acrescentar valor ao material recolhido face à simples entrada deste na comunidade como um especialista interessado em recolher e interpretar dados.

Deste modo, a pesquisa e os dados do património cultural reunidos para o arquivo incluem não apenas a documentação tradicional de práticas culturais, mas também a forma como a comunidade escolhe representar as suas práticas para alguém de fora da comunidade, através do que chamamos de processo de resposta criativa. Os etnógrafos e artistas podem assim trabalhar com as comunidades-alvo para criar um tipo de preservação que inclui detalhes sobre a comunidade, as suas interações, a dinâmica intergeracional e o impacto da evolução do contexto e clima em torno da comunidade. Esta abordagem à pesquisa e documentação etnográfica afasta-se, então, da observação e recolha tradicionais em direção a uma abordagem que envolve a comunidade na preservação das suas próprias práticas.

Este trabalho insere-se na área emergente dos estudos sobre media digitais, em particular na relação entre as áreas dos estudos sonoros, dos arquivos e da etnografia digital. É explorada a separação entre teoria e prática na academia e proposto um paradigma que ilustra o benefício na sua unificação. Através da exploração de uma nova abordagem ao arquivo, baseada em formas emergentes de comunicação e expressão usando media digitais, é analisado o valor de incluir no arquivo de uma prática cultural a resposta criativa humana a essa prática, fundada na transformação dos materiais e artefactos culturais. Por fim, é discutida a forma como a resposta criativa se relaciona e contribui para os estudos sobre media digitais, como uma prática que medeia a interseção entre etnografia e os estudos sonoros, ao mesmo tempo em que pretende contribuir para o arquivo, o ativismo e a colaboração que emergem deste campo de investigação híbrido.

III. Acknowledgments

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This research and resulting dissertation would not have been possible without collaborations with the communities in which I have conducted research. I would like to thank Dhanaraj Keezhara and his wife, Nisha Raj, for their kindness, support, and wonderful creative spirits as collaborators on the Theyyam exhibition and research. I would also like to thank Dr. Michele Bambling for asking me to participate in the Lest We Forget Project and for her unending collaborative spirit and generosity. It is because of her support and encouragement that I was able to partner with Lest We Forget, work with a group of amazing Emirati girls, and conduct research on the project. I would also like to recognize the numerous communities and individual collaborators around the world who helped contribute to the sound map project, though they are too many to name here their willingness to record sounds in their communities has grown this project in a beautiful way.

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The key methodological factor in Anthony Dunne's work is what he terms 'prafunctionality,' or using the process of invention as a mode of discourse.
(Dunne, 2006)

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VI. Notes on Terminology

For the purposes of this dissertation I will refer to the sound field recordings I have collected through my research as recordings of traditional sounds. The language of traditional sounds is adapted from the ethnomusicological categorization of traditional music, which is distinctive and separate from the designations of both folklore music and world music. As Laurent Aubert states, “Numerous people agree that traditional music genres are expressions of identity distinct from the ‘derivative products,’ which are, for example, the so-called folklore music or those belonging to the present world music movement” (Laurent, 2007, p. 16). I have chosen the terminology “traditional sounds” as an intentional offshoot of the categorization of traditional music, in an attempt to name and connect two important characteristics of the resulting sounds that I will be using in the development of creative work. First, I am attempting to properly categorize the sounds I have recorded and believe they are best explained as traditional music; however, in order to remain sensitive to cultural values within these traditions, in particular not referring to the Adhan, the call to prayer, as musical, I will refer to these recordings as traditional sounds. Second, I recognize and want to honor that there are common components of traditional music, including form, content, means of production, listening conditions, social and cultural context, and values, that may be compromised or changed in the process of recording and artistic creation (During, 1994). For this reason I will refer to the recordings captured in the field as those of traditional sounds, and not traditional music, while acknowledging

that the traditional sounds recorded are in fact of traditional music, as per

Aubert's description:

In general, music from the traditional realm – and it is the same for all arts – is of remote origin and relies on direct, essentially oral transmission of its forms, techniques and repertoire. This transmission can vary considerably in its methods, but is in itself the guarantor of authenticity, the link in an uninterrupted chain joining masters and disciples through time. Every artist adapts the received inheritance, developing and calorizing it according to personal taste and current style. Not being a simple imitator, the artist is the living incarnations of tradition, as well as its depository and guarantor. The artist also has the duty to transmit as much of it as possible, to teach the following generation, including his or her own personal contributions. (Laurent, 2007, p. 19)

1 Introduction

1. Introduction

I would argue that it is the artist's understanding of the potential value of "becomingness" through cultural capital that applies to the present moment too. As has been stated by Derrida, the 'vision' to see what needs to be archived is now the work of the artist/s: to anticipate the archive itself" (White, 2013, p. 55).

1.1 Section One: Introduction

1.1.1 Approach

I start with the assumption that any exploration of self in the world is connected to the exploration of the human condition; that an individual's personal experience cannot be seen as isolated from collective or universal experience. Using the emotional self to express identity, especially in relation to aspects of material culture, leads to a process of learning that allows for profound intersubjective connections with the experiences of others; in short, personal interactions are essential to complex understandings of the world at large.

Currently we have certain standards that govern ethnographic research, which help to guide the way academics interact and engage with communities, cultures, and people whom they are researching. Traditionally, the role of ethnographer, as I discuss in the second chapter, has been understood as one who observes, describes, and documents cultural practices and artifacts for purposes of preservation. Fieldwork is the observational component of ethnographic research, which requires the researcher to maintain extreme objectivity in regards to the community they are researching, in order to ensure their observations and documentation are unbiased. (Barz and Cooley, 2008)

Some ethnographers have attempted to redefine traditional ethnographic standards to encompass partial subjectivity of the researcher (Pink et al., 2016).

Often when academic ethnographers research a community, they bring to their research a sense of expertise and clout granted them by the academy. The artifacts they collect and preserve are often a combination of written observations, photographs, interviews, and artifacts. Their written documentation becomes a folklorization of a community or a cultural practice. This folklorization comes about when an ethnographers notes and documentation are seen as the expert representation, which then tends to freeze the archival documentation of that community in that written observation. One outcome of folklorization is a stagnant view or portrayal of a community or tradition at the moment of documentation, in the particular way the moment is captured. This snapshot becomes the understanding of the community or tradition, unfortunately ignoring the evolution of the community over time.

The challenge inherent in this traditional ethnographic approach is that true objectivity is arguably not achievable. The question is, can we truly be objective about anything? Our understanding of the world around is filtered through our personal lens and experience. In order to address this problem in ethnographic research, this dissertation builds on the current standards in ethnographic practice, while operating under the assumption that a researcher cannot have objective views. By assuming that objectivity is not achievable and admitting that you are subjective, one solves much of the problem of not being able to be objective. Conducting ethnographic research from a subjective perspective—arguably one that all ethnographers have historically functioned from if objectivity is not possible—allows the researcher the ability to interact

with the community in ways that traditional ethnographic standards have not supported.

By engaging with the community and ceding opportunity for engagement to the community, the ethnographer is no longer folklorizing or archiving their ethnographic research, rather they are creating a type of preservation that allows for nuanced details of the community, their interactions, inter-generational dynamics, and the impact of the evolution of the community in the context of the changing landscape and climate of the world around it. This approach to ethnographic research and documentation moves away from traditional observation-based preservation and toward an approach that engages a community in their own preservation.

As I elaborate upon in Chapter 2, The Literature Review, Harris Berger is noted with defining “Expressive Culture” in his book *Stance: Ideas about Emotion, Style, and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture*, to refer to any type of social behavior with an aesthetic dimension. When I discuss the cultural traditions and performances I capture through field recording, I will refer to “sensitive expressive culture” as social behavior with an aesthetic dimension that is uniquely attached to a particular cultural heritage that can be carelessly appropriated by an outsider.

I began my research by looking at creative responses to material of sensitive expressive culture that I had created, either by myself or collaboratively, in three different case studies. I first applied an ethnographic lens to help me record and document the cultural material, such as the Theyyam festival in India, and position myself as an “observer.” I focused particularly on sound, out of the belief that sound gives us access to cultural and oral traditions and heritage, as well as

the ability for people to currently reflect on that heritage. Sound is also the compositional medium I chose to use across all three case studies. In the case of the Theyyam festival, I collaborated with a visual artist to create a creative response to the festival in the form of an exhibit that merged his visual art with my soundscape, as an attempt to call attention to caste hierarchies present within the festival/culture. In the Lest We Forget case study, I worked with a vernacular photography collection team to collect, document, and facilitate community member's creative response to stories and oral tradition, toward developing an archive of the Emirati community, and to support the opening of an exhibition on Emirati cultural heritage. In the Sonic Storyboard project, I collected recordings of the call to prayer from mosques around the world, and created a web based repository for these adhans, as well as developed an interactive sound installation, positioning visitors as augmenters of the adhan, as a way of looking more closely at Islamophobia through the nuance of the adhan.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I looked back at each of these instances of creative response and asked, in each case: What did the creative responses contribute to the preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage? What were some of the limitations and challenges of using creative response? And finally, what larger "lessons" about the role creative response might play in the future of archives, can I draw from these case studies?

My research explores how the disciplines of digital media, ethnographic practice, and the archives can join a larger conversation about sustaining cultural heritage for posterity. I identify ways that artwork developed through creative response to documentation of cultural tradition can capture important temporal moments in the context of the sociopolitical frameworks in which they exist. The

fields of digital media, ethnography, and archival studies can work together to not only preserve certain aspects of cultural heritage, but also to solidify important aspects of a particular society and make them relevant in the present day.

Identifying how to transform or translate form, or reshaping the formal properties of culture and heritage for greater understanding can be a basis for changing the way we understand things that are unknown. Exploring a new culture, transforming material from that culture, and preserving the result of this exploration and transformation (through the progressive mediums of ethnography, arts practice, and archiving) allow for new and essential markers of understanding.

1.1.2 Motivation

By way of introduction to this work, I feel it will be helpful to give readers some brief contextual information about my multidisciplinary background, my experiences living in diverse cultures, and the reasons behind my choice to pursue digital media as the medium of my research and practice. My early training in the arts included music, photography, and technical theater. In college and graduate school, I opted to use photography as a medium to explore and analyze key questions and ideas that informed my academic research including a project that explored gender identity through women's colleges in the US, and a project that looked at the sociological implications of gender socialization in schooling environments in India. The only rule I set for myself when it came to my progression through the stages of higher education was that each next step had to allow me to continue to express creativity.

When I finished my master's degree, my focus turned toward creating artwork in response to the heritage of particular communities. In December 2005, I moved to India and conducted qualitative research within a sociological theoretical framework of teachers at Banasthali Vidyapith, the school in rural Western Rajasthan where I taught for one month. The research considered gender socialization among elementary school aged children and among women doing their BA and BS degrees, as well as the behavior and assumptions of graduate students in the M.Ed program studying to be teachers. I chose to express the findings of the research in the form of a photographic exhibition. Shortly thereafter, my academic interests in religious studies merged with my artistic practice through field recordings. I made recordings of different religious festivals and recitations as a way of parsing inclinations I had about the sonic and musical relationships between varying religious traditions. For the next few years I would continue to explore and compare the sound recordings of various festivals and musical religious traditions through the use of recording tools and software innovations.

In 2010, after I moved to the Middle East, my visits to India became more frequent due to easy access and proximity, and my practice of recording religious festivals continued in India and began in the United Arab Emirates, where I lived. My creative and research interests further expanded to include ethnographic practice, made possible by my sustained involvement in communities in both India and the Middle East. My sonic fascination with religious tradition was quickly piqued by the call to prayer that was now a part of my daily soundscape. This began a currently five-year-long, ongoing project, in which I record the adhan (call to prayer) from mosques around the world.

My artwork and scholarly research are now solidly fused as a practice that relies on ethnographic research of religious traditions, sound studies techniques for recording and composition, and archival considerations for the outcomes of this hybrid work. My multidisciplinary approach to making art and conducting research manages to stay true to the promise made by my younger self; that each new step should allow me to continue to express creativity.

1.1.3 Statement of the Problem

My work highlights and responds to a number of challenges that are connected to the following essential questions.

- Recognizing that artists who use sensitive expressive material from cultures other than their own, need to deal with acceptance issues both within their own cultures of origin as well as the cultures from which sensitive expressive material is being borrowed, we must ask: How and to what extent can such an artist, play a role in the archival preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage and tradition?
- What is it that the participant observer can witness and contribute from a vantage point that is neither fully inside a culture nor entirely at an “objective” distance from it?
- How can we make an archive living?

- What is the value of engaging people in artistic response about cultural artifacts from their own community and why should artistic creation matter to the archive?

As an explanatory note to some of the above, I use my own artistic practice in this dissertation, creating work from field recordings I have made of sensitive expressive culture, along with collaborations I have had with artists and members of different communities highlighted in my research, to explore this essential question from the perspective of a participant observer. By this I mean that within my research I am both an artist (participant) whose work is observed and written about, as well as a researcher who writes about other artists' work as well as my own (observer). My research proposes that artistic practice can be a lens through which artists inquire about culture, community, and heritage. Through their role as observers of communities, that are not their own, artists develop practices that serves as a form of analysis of that community. This analysis is important to document and preserve because it offers inquiry based exploration of aspects of cultural heritage, that are placed in relationship to one another and the community, through creative means in a way that may otherwise be missed or overlooked by more traditional academic inquiry.

Certain challenges I have faced include, negotiating the varied and sometimes conflicting disciplinary requirements as a result of taking on a multidisciplinary approach to research; articulating the need for and legitimacy of including creative responses in archives; finding space for creativity and personal expression while valuing ethnography's emphasis on ethics; and the incorporation of ethical practice in artistic practice.

1.1.4 Goals

My intention in this dissertation is to place digital media artistic practices in sound, ethnographic research, and archival studies, in conversation—with the following intended outcomes: 1) To further existing discourse about the intersections and potential for hybrid disciplinarity between artistic practice and ethnographic inquiry. This approach considers the ethics of such work and helps to provide a way for artists to create work when they are engaging with material of sensitive expressive culture. 2) To consider how the specific role digital media artists play in contributing to and developing new materials for the archive helps to preserve and sustain specific cultural heritage and traditions.

1.1.5 Comments on My Artistic Process

In order to write this dissertation, I have attempted to clearly identify and articulate the question I wanted to ask, and the problems that have driven my research. However, given the multidisciplinary approach to my research, formal methods have been difficult to identify. Here I will discuss some of the problems I have encountered with regard to methodology throughout the process of researching and writing.

From the onset it became clear that the multidisciplinary nature of my interests, questions, and research made it difficult to identify any single methodology that was appropriate for the scope of the project. My research raised questions across the disciplines of digital media studies, ethnographic studies, ethnomusicology, archival studies, and artistic practice and research. In order to find methods that allowed me to analyze and discuss my research I had

to identify the key areas within each discipline that my work touched on, as well as the points where these areas overlapped with the other disciplines. This allowed me to identify the current relevant research and its relationship to my proposed area of inquiry. I found that there are a number of scholars who are currently working on research and developing methods that connect two of the disciplinary frameworks within digital media, ethnographic research, and the archives. I decided to use the most innovative and relevant methods being developed by these scholars within my research, as is highlighted in Chapter 2. The works I reference include Jussi Parikka's (2013) work in media archaeology, Hal Foster's (2004) work in bringing art into the archives, Jonathan Sterne's (2012) and Brandon Labelle's (2015) work on sound culture, Sara Pink et al's (2015) work in digital ethnography, and Florian Dombois et al's (2012) work on artistic practice as research. I approached this research largely from a digital ethnography methodology, which looks at ethnographic practice in a digital media arena, and incorporated relevant research from the archival, musicological, and digital media domains (media archaeology, sound studies, and applied ethnomusicology) to support my research and some of the hybrid conclusions that resulted.

When I began my field research, I saw the process of ethnographic research as fairly straightforward, and considered the field recordings I made as a part of the research, as well as material I would use in my artistic practice. When I began the process of making art from those field recordings, I realized that my artistic practice considered the origin of the field recordings as important to the process of creating soundscapes with them. These two approaches—ethnographic research and artistic practice—were placed in

relation to one another, making it necessary to find a framework for looking at the two pieces of the process together, which was more difficult. It became necessary to look outside and beyond the footholds of individual disciplines to find the scholars who are boundary crossers in their own right. Such writing does exist, and serves as an important framework for how to place disciplines with limited scholarly overlap, in conversation with one another. For example, David Samuels et al. (2010) in "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology," writes about the relationship between anthropology and soundscapes: "It is our hope that by tracing the genealogies and histories of the concept of the soundscape we will promote such attention and enable anthropologists and other scholars of culture to engage the full potential of sound—and in sound—for the theoretical project of anthropology" (Samuels et al., 2010, p. 340). The writers consider the relationship between the soundscape and anthropology to be mutually beneficial, whereby a focus on sound allows anthropologists to consider and uncover historical relevance through a sounded context; one that they may have otherwise and previously overlooked. The authors also write about the historical relationship anthropologists have with sound as a tool for research, particularly in the form of field recording as one that has often been discredited in its value.

The hermeneutics of varying disciplines are different; as a result it can be challenging to see the interconnectedness of research analyzed using two different hermeneutic frameworks. Developing research projects that are multidisciplinary from the outset necessitates agreement between researchers from different disciplines about how they will collect and analyze their findings—or, at the very least, negotiation between collaborators that serves to

challenge different epistemological and hermeneutic approaches to research. This process makes us always return to the basic yet fundamental question essential to good research practices and outcomes: *What is the importance of this research, and why?*

Similarly, a multidisciplinary approach is also critical to the development of new epistemologies. Many disciplinary subfields are theoretically related to their parent disciplines, though they may deviate slightly; for example, ethnomusicology as a discipline grew out of anthropology and, to a slightly different degree, applied ethnomusicology, which was created as a subfield of ethnomusicology. Considering the theoretical frameworks of individual disciplines in relationship to one another allows for a robust and dynamic dialogue about the interconnected nature of different theories of knowledge that could result in the development of a completely new theory of knowledge that otherwise might not have been considered.

1.1.6 Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in three main parts, first the proposed question and ideas that fueled this work, the introduction and overview of the state of the art, which is followed by the research I have conducted to explore these questions and postulate ideas, these are the three case studies which I draw from, and the third section is a discussion of why these case studies are in conversation with one another and the outcomes and conclusions I draw from this research.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the origins of this project, where it came from and some of the key questions and ideas that drove the resulting research and analysis.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and research that is relevant to this thesis by going into great depth in three fields of inquiry that inform the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The three fields are digital media studies, ethnographic studies as seen through ethnomusicology and applied ethnomusicology, and archival studies, including media archaeology. I will look at seminal texts and scholars in these areas to provide a foundation and critical entry point for my main ideas and arguments. I also take the opportunity to reflect on how some of my ideas are related to and built from ideas proposed by scholars in these fields.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will cover three case studies that serve as the foundation of my research. Chapter 3 is an in-depth ethnographic study of the Theyyam festival in the village of Keezhara in Northern Kerala, India. This chapter provides deep ethnographic observation of the festival and the community, focusing on the artistic collaboration I have with artist Dhanaraj Keezhara and the exhibition we created from documentation of the festival, entitled *Everyday Life*.

Chapter 4 is a case study of *Lest We Forget*, an Emirati vernacular photography collection developed by university students and their professor in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The chapter provides an ethnographic account of the collection and associated exhibitions developed by the students and the Emirati community, through intergenerational dialogue and artistic response. I specifically look at the project through the lens of oral history workshops I

conducted with the students, looking at ways they can begin to incorporate the stories shared with them by their parents and grandparents, into an artistic exhibition that is used to communicate the findings of the collection of vernacular photographs.

Chapter 5 looks at the third case study, *Sonic Storyboard: The Call to Prayer*, an exploration of the process of collecting field recordings of the call to prayer from mosques around the world, and the way these recordings were used to develop an interactive sound installation, as well as a web-based sound map viewers can navigate to listen to the call to prayer from different places around the world.

Chapter 6 is the Discussion section, in which the three case studies are placed in conversation with one another and with the theoretical frameworks from the disciplines from where this research is derived. The Discussion section both asks and answers questions about why these things are in conversation with one another, why they matter to one another, and why this work matters more broadly as an important scholarly contribution.

Finally, Chapter 7 serves as a conclusion and will be an overview of why I have chosen to conduct this research and the key outcomes, as well as the original contribution this work makes to the fields of artistic scholarship and ethnographic research. Here I also provide guidelines for further study.

2 Literature Review

2. Literature Review

2.1 Section One: The Archive

2.1.1 The Archive

“[T]he question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come.”

—Jacques Derrida (1995, p. 36)

One fundamental question raised by this dissertation is: how and to what extent can artists play a role in preserving and sustaining cultural heritage and tradition? To approach this question, I will consider the disciplines of archival studies, ethnography, and digital media, as these three areas are heavily interconnected in my research, and necessary to explore in order to consider the questions posed within. To begin, let us look at the passage above, taken from Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), in which he considers the question of the archive. Derrida argues that the question of the archive is a question of the future, rather than one of the present, and also a question about the meaning of the archive, which he argues can only be ascertained in the future, when people look back on that which has been archived with an eye that can see what the archive came to mean. Derrida argues that the question of the archive is also a question of our responsibility to tomorrow.

I interpret Derrida's (1995) statement to mean that what we choose to archive, the very question of what the archive represents, also has an impact on how we see today and tomorrow. The objects and stories we deem important to represent us in the future, shape how we identify our community and ourselves today. How will we see 100 years ago in 300 years? Derrida is arguing that the very decision of what the archive is, what it contains, what it aims to do, and how it is woven into the fabric of society, carries the responsibility for what tomorrow understands of today.

Michel Foucault (1969) argued in *L'archéologie du savoir*¹ that the "archaeologist of knowledge" uses physical objects and remains from the past to help reconstruct an archive in the present, and that this process reveals information about humanities relationship to the past and the way we construct historical meaning. Foucault also argues that the archive serves, as a system of what is valued in a society, what is chosen to be recorded, or not recorded, and importantly serves as a definition for which parts of history are written down and saved. These scholars force us to question what history is, how our understanding of the past and present create an understanding of a society in the future, and how well we are able to document history through the written word. And as Charles Merewether poses, "Is what is materially present, visible or legible adequate to an event that has passed out of present time?" (Merewether, 2006, p. 12). Derrida (1995) argues that political power in any context is connected to control of the archive, as control of the archive is control over an aspect of societal memory.

¹ While I give reference to Michel Foucault's original book, which was penned in French in 1969, as a non-Francophone, the version I have read is the 1972 English translation by AM Sheridan Smith entitled, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

Archives are created when objects or texts are deemed important to preserve for a particular community. Storing and restoring these artifacts is integral to keeping cultural memory or the impact of an historical event alive. The importance of an event to the community plays a decisive role in keeping the past alive in the present moment. In effect the past needs to serve as a living shadow to the present, and that representation of the past should be holistically inclusive, not only of reproductions of events, but of seemingly tangential elements that become central signifiers of time, space, context, and cultural memory.

In their essay *Archiving Digital Cultural Artifacts*, Peter Lyman and Brewster Kahle (1998) argue that cultural artifacts created or migrated to a digital medium are more freely accessed and utilized, and that these artifacts can be represented in varying forms, and are adaptable within emerging media unlike their analog counterparts, which generally live in a library or in a physical archive.

In present day the practice of field recording relies on digital recorders and technology that creates a file made up of 1s and 0s, which a computer can interpret and use to reconstruct the visual image of an analog sine wave in our audio editing software programs. These digital recordings of oral traditions, histories, music, and sonic environments translate culture from the analog world around us into digital content, or as Lyman and Kahle call it, digital cultural artifacts. The process of this translation from the analog—that which we capture with our microphones—to the digital—that which is made of so many 1's and 0's that it can only truly be interpreted by computers—arguably distances us from

the authenticity of that culture, and moves us closer to a more authentic preservation of it.

Lyman and Kahle (1998, para. 5) define culture as “something we do, a performance which fades into memory then disappears.” The preservation of cultural practices and traditions therefore requires documentation and archiving, and the digital domain offers new approaches to that preservation and distribution. In his discussion of the World Wide Web as a cultural artifact Lyman says, “the key questions about it [the web] are not to be answered in the nature of its artifacts alone, but in the emerging social forms which are made possible by these new media” (Lyman & Kahle, 1998, para. 8). Higher fidelity and new digital formats enhance our ability to archive and protect digital artifacts. However, beyond the superficially obvious benefit of easier preservation of the physical object of the artifact, the difference between a decaying cassette tape and a bunch of 1s and 0s in a computer, is the value of a digital artifact in circulating through our globally transmedia world. Whereas a document in an archive often means a piece of paper in a building in a particular geographic location, this is not true for physical collections that have digitized their paper based archives, a digital artifact can mean information that can be accessed in a variety of formats and locations, possibly from almost anywhere that has access to the internet.

In this dissertation I suggest that creative responses to expressive cultural traditions play a critical role in capturing not only important aspects of the tradition itself, but also possesses within them important metadata of the time—information about the present moment in which the tradition occurred. Derrida’s (1995) approach to defining and understanding what the archive means, brings

our attention to the interpretative nature of archives, and to the fact that we are not just seeing recorded “facts” in an archive, but instead, we are witnessing an active shaping of history. I would suggest that his arguments leave ample space for art to be an important part of the definition of the archive, as artistic practice has the power to make the creative acts of selection and making—which we are doing when we construct an archive—exposed.

2.1.2 Artists and the Archive

*Just as artists are no longer the lone agent of the avant garde,
the archivist is also no longer a gate-keeper of the institutional order;
each are guides whose knowledge of the topology of domains can steer us
through uncharted yet contested territories of the expanded field of the
archive.*

-Neal White (2013, p. 61)

An increasing number of scholars including Florian Dombois et al. (2012), Hal Foster (2004), and Judy Vaknin et al (2013) argue that creative documentation projects can play an important role in traditional archives, and that artists have a unique capacity to make historical information contemporary and relevant. This concept was pre-dated in the archival world by the notion that archival practice itself is a political act (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). Andrew Flinn (2011) argues that history making and archiving is frequently connected to social transformation and activism. In this section I will explore the scholars and artists who have been trailblazers in defining the importance and need for artistic practice to be archived, and the value art and artists can bring to the

archive both with regard to political agenda, and as connected to the archival mission of preservation and documentation.

Diane Taylor (2003) considers the idea of ‘impacting’ archival material through artistic change and the way this process contributes to the development of critical, non-reproducible knowledge. She expands on this idea in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, when she describes a rift between “archival” memory—“items supposedly resistant to change”—and repertoire, which “enacts embodied memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing-in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge” (Taylor, 2003, p. 19).

A repertoire is intangible; it describes a list of items or a body of knowledge or experiences, rather than a solid object that can be read or interpreted as from a specific time or place. A repertoire suggests a collection that can be transferred over time and space. According to Taylor (2003), human nature seems inclined to build silos of knowledge and expertise, categories and classifications that can lead to hierarchical power structures. Archival material, which has been catalogued and classified, maintains a semblance of pure form, meaning that the raw material is considered untouched and unchanged.

Taylor (2003) argues that what changes over time is the value, relevance, or meaning of the archive, as well as how the items within become interpreted and even embodied. For example bones remain the same while their story may change, depending on the paleontologist or forensic anthropologist who examines them. It is possible that different experts may glean different types of information about origin, death, or timeline from the bones. Antigone might be performed in multiple ways, while the unchanging text assures a stable signifier.

Written texts allow scholars to trace literary traditions, sources and influences, but are also subject to changing interpretations.

In "Experiments and Archives in the Expanded Field," Neil White (2013) discusses the role arts research has recently played in mediating the archive, noting that the experiment, which has widely been used as a model for historical analysis of science, is now being used to analyze research in the arts.

In this approach, new 'epistemic things' and even 'technical objects' produced in the development of experimental systems, become methods of examining the nature and materiality of the archive and what knowledge is being produced in the development of experimental archives. (p. 52)

White's essay highlights the importance of creative and alternative methods in activating the archives, while recognizing the challenge of researching the impact those creative methods have on the archive. White argues,

In remaining attentive to the material resistances of the archive, the artist...has more fundamental value to the archive than as a symbolic, aesthetically resistant, engaged individual...each are guides whose knowledge of the topology of domains can steer us through uncharted yet contested territories of the expanded field of the archive. (2013, p. 61).

In other words, part of the value that artists can bring to archiving, according to White, is their attentiveness to that which is actually a part of the archive, the material that becomes archived, and that which is considered archival.

While White argues for the importance of creative methods as an approach to exploring the materiality of the archive, others like Hal Foster (2004) in "An Archival Impulse" and Jessica Santone (2008) in *Marina Abramović's Seven Easy Pieces: Critical Documentation Strategies for Preserving Art's History*, disagree and

instead suggest that it is actually the artists and the artwork that should be explored as important material to be included in the archive. While Foster argues that artists can enliven the currently stale archives, Santone argues that we should be looking toward the specifics of artistic practice and documentation as a roadmap for how to re-engage with the archive. Foster and Santone's contributions have been crucial to changing the thinking about how archives are conceived of, organized, and engaged with; yet, what is missing from the research on artists in the archives is the artists' voices themselves and a significant movement of artist participation in the questions of archiving and their engagement with archival materials. I will argue that what is needed is an approach that combines artists' enlivening the archive from Foster's perspective, together with artists' methods and creative approaches serving as a roadmap for the archives, which Santone calls for—essentially a method that combines research on artists in the archive and artists' engagement with archival materials, for the purposes of better understanding what artists can contribute to the preservation and sustainability of important archival materials.

Foster (2004) positions archival art as an important player in changing the landscape of the archival world. He writes about the ways artists as archivists can enliven the otherwise stale approach to archiving that we see in museums and other similar institutions through their differently oriented approach to organization. He writes that the “move to turn ‘excavation sites’ into ‘construction sites’ ...suggests a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic” (Foster, 2004, p. 22). For Foster, archival art has the power to shift the way we think about the past—from melancholic nostalgia to active, enlivened creation of a collective history.

Foster's work is fundamental to the research I will present in Chapter 4. The Lest We Forget Collection is at the helm of what Hal Foster calls "an archival impulse," where "archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and text, and favor the installation format as they do so" (Foster, 2004, p. 4). Traditionally, archival material has been considered source information, unchanged and in its original form. With the digital revolution came greater access to tools and resources for digital preservation and restoration, which begged the question of how to maintain material in an archive, with regard to these new digital tools and formats. As Foster (2004) points out, "sometimes archival samplings push the postmodernist complications of originality and authorship to an extreme" (pp. 4). With these new technologies, also came new possibilities for organizing, referencing, and accessing archival materials, raising questions about the archive as a physical space that people come to, and considering new ways to engage the public in the archive. However, it is not the digital revolution that has caused agitation about what constitutes archival material; this question has been raised by the artists.

Foster places archival art in conversation with the traditional museum as archive, in order to legitimize archival artists and their work. He argues:

Finally, the work in question is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private. Further, it often arranges these materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects (again, platforms, stations, kiosks...). (Foster, 2004, p. 5)

The Lest We Forget project pushes our understanding of archived material by placing an emphasis on creative response as a valid and critical component of its collection. By doing so, LWF has created a conversation and an entry point for younger Emirati generations to care about and be invested in—not just learn about—the experiences of previous generations, and their relationship to those aspects of their own culture and heritage.

Jessica Santone argues that creative archival projects have the capacity to “highlight loss, absence, fallibility and technological mediation as inherent and productive aspects of documentation” (Santone, 2008, p. 152). She argues that these projects “remind us of the “found, yet constructed” quality of both archives and documents. They encourage performative and critical responses from us as we contemplate new documentation strategies” (Santone, 2008, p. 151). Santone’s research suggests that the creative approach an artist takes in executing her work can promote active reflection on the process of archiving itself, and the approach to how we think about preserving information as a society.

While Taylor (2003), White (2013), Foster (2004), and Santone (2008) all value the role of the artist in the archive, authors Dombois, Bauer, Mareis, and Schwab (2012) offer a different approach to looking at the way artists can interact with a variety of institutions and disciplines, through the concept of “artistic research.” In their book, *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, the authors assert that, “artistic research is an activity for border-crossers” (Dombois et al., 2012, p. 11). They suggest that those who participate in artistic research often find themselves working between varying disciplines

and are not bound to a particular frontier. *Intellectual Birdhouse* defines “artistic research” as being,

Independent of ‘discipline’ and might occur in all contexts once epistemic expectations have shifted... it is both a matter of productive and reflective work on and with the material, and artistic research often involves testing forms of representation other than text as well as engaging in open negotiations with knowledge. (Ibid, p. 11).

In her essay “Paradoxes Experienced by Artist-Thinkers,” Renée Green (2012) suggests that “artistic-thinkers” all share a similar inquisitive nature, which entails analysis and inquiry that is realized through a form of creation. Green also suggests that work developed by “artist-thinkers” enjoys a timeless sustainability due in part to the methods and analysis used in creation: “A distinguishing feature in each of their productions is that even as times continue to change, it can still be compelling to revisit and reconsider what they made and thought” (Green, 2012, p. 271). Greene’s concept of “artist-thinkers” as those who create a type of scholarly work that is also artistic is useful because it considers the hybridity of an individual whose work is both creatively minded and engaged in analysis and inquiry. If we understand art and creativity as a crucial part of and window into research and documentation, rather than as a supplementary non-scholarly form of inquiry, then actively developing creativity and creative projects becomes a way to enter and understand different disciplinary areas of scholarship and research.

R. Murray Schafer is credited with coining the term soundscape in 1977 as “any acoustic field of study” (Schafer, 1977, p. 7). Schafer argues the importance

of the soundscape as a document of a sonic environment in a moment in time, much like a photograph captures a landscape. He argues,

While we may have numerous photographs taken at different times, and before them drawings and maps to show us how a scene changed over the ages, we must make inferences as to the changes of the soundscape...More than this, sounds may alter or disappear with scarcely a comment even from the most sensitive of historians. (Schafer, 1977, p. 8)

Schafer (1977) categorized the main themes of a soundscape into three categories: keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks. He defines keynote as a musical term that is the anchor tone of a composition that may be listened to subconsciously. Schafer defines signals as sounds in the foreground that are consciously listened to. The clearest example Schafer gives is of signals that are acoustic warning devices like bells, whistles, sirens and horns. The soundmark, derived from landmark, is a sound that is unique to or specially regarded by a community. Soundmarks help to create the unique acoustic life of a community.

In my own work on soundscape development, documenting the soundscapes becomes both a way of documenting culture, and also seeing a soundscape as a living, breathing, constantly changing thing that allows an archivist to not only capture a sonic “snapshot” of a place and time, but also put one’s fingerprint on it. Archiving a soundscape, then, becomes an important bridge between the artistic practice of soundscape design, and the cultural moments being captured through the field recordings and soundscape.

2.1.3 Activism

Activism is no stranger to the archive. In 1977 Patrick M. Quinn, archivist at Northwestern University, wrote an essay entitled *The Archivist as Activist*, where he reflected on a turn toward activism in the archival community in the United States between 1970 and 1977. In the essay, Quinn (1977) tells the story of professor Howard Zinn, a historian from Boston University, who presented a paper entitled *The American Archivist and Radical Reform* at the Society for American Archivists (SAA) Annual Meeting in 1970. Quinn noted how Zinn called for action from fellow archivists to strive for better documentation of minorities and to fight for the opening of government documents to the public, both of which were considered radical notions at that time. Quinn talks about the gasps and shock from members of the SAA in response to Zinn's call to activism, as well as attempts in the years following to fight against his call for transparency and inclusion. Quinn then maps out an overview of changes in the field of Archiving over seven years following Zinn's paper, finding that the SAA did in fact move in the direction that Zinn was initially shunned for proposing. In concluding the essay, Quinn writes,

What then is activism? Is it not the process by which each individual archivist acts upon his or her convictions, rather than passively acquiescing to whatever real or imagined conditions or set of circumstances conspire to circumscribe our views, our visions, our goals, our aspirations. If that is what activism is all about, then let us have more of it. Let us incorporate it as an integral component of the archival revolution of our time. (Quinn, 1977, p. 10)

In present-day archives, activism has been incorporated into the missions of some archive and heritage institutions. Activism in the archive can take a

variety of forms, including but not limited to: social transformation through archiving, community engagement and external outreach, bringing greater diversity into the archive, and re-orienting ideas of custodianship of archival materials to place them in the hands of those to whom they belong.

While Quinn (1977) argues that activism took hold in archival communities in the early 1970's, Andrew Flinn (2011) dates large scale social and cultural change to the post world war two era, and argues that concerns around the stories of those communities traditionally ignored, can be connected to the emergence of new academic disciplines from the 1960's through the 1980's in social histories, identity histories, and oral history.

Flinn (2011) provides an understanding of the widespread interest in activism within archival communities in his article, "Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions." Flinn explores projects that engage in radical approaches to history-making, as well as the response to these projects from archive and heritage professionals. His research is concerned with balancing stories of community-led archival projects that have an activist orientation with developing suggestions for archive and heritage professionals and institutions that allow for these new radical approaches to be incorporated into the ethos of these institutions. Flinn's research focuses on four projects; Future Histories² a well established archive of African, Asian, and Caribbean performing arts in the UK, rukus!³ The Black LGBT Archive Project, Moroccan Memories⁴ a collection of oral histories and materials of people of Moroccan Heritage in the UK, and

² For more details about Future Histories and their work see: <http://www.futurehistories.org.uk>

³ For more details about rukus! Black LGBT Archive project see: <http://www.rukus.co.uk>

⁴ For more details about Moroccan Memories and Moroccan Memories Foundation see: <http://www.moroccanmemories.org.uk>

Eastside Community Heritage⁵, a project that documents the cultures of East London's working class communities. He adopted an ethnographic participatory observation approach to observe the archives and develop recommendations for archive professionals to take on a more active engagement in their relationship with the archive by incorporating an activist approach to outreach and collections development, which is critical for heritage and archival institutions to stay current, and more importantly to maintain their status as "trusted sites of information and memory" (Flinn, 2011).

Unlike Quinn (1977) and Flinn (2011), who research the origins of activism and its intersection with the archives, Athanasios Velios (2011) goes one step further by suggesting the idea of Creative Archiving. In *Creative Archiving: A Case Study for the John Latham Archive*, Velios explores the value of interpretation and creative organization, and its impact on the accessibility of an archive. The article specifically focuses on adopting creative archiving techniques for archives of creative work, as a means of collating and interpreting a wide body of work so that it can be made more easily understood and accessible. Velios also speaks of the archivist as educator:

The role of the archivist as an educator can be critical for the communication of ideas, which exist in the archive. There is no doubt that the archivist's/educator's opinion is partial and subjective, but this is the case with any teacher. In recognition of the archivist's awareness of her or his own subjectivity, the online archive is clearly marked as an interpretation. (Velios, 2011, p. 267)

This approach allows for the educator or artist to map their expertise onto the archival material to create a new product, while maintaining a

⁵ For more details about Eastside Community Heritage see: <http://www.hidden-histories.org.uk>

distinction between that which is the archival material and that, which is the interpretation. This allows for the preservation of the archival material, which as Flinn highlights is the role many heritage and archival institutions already play, while adding a creative archiving layer as a new tool, which archives can use toward greater activism.

Yet, as Patrick Quinn's (1977) work highlights, not everyone in the archival community is open to change and the move toward activism. A tendency towards initial pushback against new ideas exists in every community and can actually be beneficial, as it forces debate, which helps people to further develop and question their proposals and ideas. For this reason it is important and interesting to share Velios's discussion on the argument against creative archiving, in which he explores the key criticism of creative archiving—that the interpretation, be it by artist, educator or archivist, will hinder access to the collection. Velios says,

This is indeed a risk when such heavy interpretation becomes the core of the archival process. There are two answers to this: (i) the archivist should be aware that the archive must be practical in some way and allow reasonable convenient tools to be used so that information retrieval is maintained as part of the archive's core functionality. However, this is not a risk of *creative archiving* only but an issue that archivists have to address regularly. (ii) It is technically possible to avoid the interpretation layer and allow the user to access raw data. In other words, the interpretation layer should not interfere with the data itself and if necessary the archival records can be accessed directly. (Velios, 2011, p. 268)

Velios discusses how accessibility is a problem of *all* archiving, and needs to be addressed regardless of the inclusion of a creative approach. Thinking of

accessibility as a regular concern of all archiving allows us to focus on the particular benefits that a creative archive might allow.

Quinn (1977), Flinn (2011), and Velios (2011) speak of the growth of activism within communities of archival professionals, and the pushback and initial resistance to new ideas and approaches. In my research I aim to continue to expand the call for activism in archives by approaching creative interpretation of archival materials as a form activism. There is an important role for artists to play in supporting archival professionals in active engagement that can be accomplished by shifting “their focus from a solely custodial and institutional approach to something, which is equally concerned with significant archival and heritage collections inside and outside the walls of their archive” (Flinn, 2011, p. 15). This dissertation is interested in investigating what creative archiving can add to archives and archival materials, allowing for artists’ interpretation of the material, which serves as a second means or touch point for access to the material.

Drawing on Taylor’s (2003) and Velios’ (2011) work, my research considers *creative archiving* as an important tool in the shaping and preservation of a community’s cultural heritage and history. Given the newness of this area, there are more questions than answers. For example how can art be included in archives?; what elements of artistic works are possible to archive and how?; and in what ways can artistic practice be incorporated into archival collections development more broadly? However, each question leads to a potential new area of exploration within archiving, and opens up new avenues for engagement with the public as well as an exciting hybridity across scholarly and practice-

based inquiries that are concerned with capturing and preserving human culture.

2.2 Section Two: Digital Media Studies

2.2.1 Digital Media Archiving

Media archaeology stems from a variety of areas and fields, including studies in the archaeologies of power and knowledge of Michel Foucault, Film history, and the more current studies of technical media culture that looks at digital and software cultures with an eye toward the past (Parikka, 2013, p. 5). According to Wolfgang Ernst and Jussi Parikka (2013), “media archaeology is both a method and an aesthetic of practicing media criticism, a kind of epistemological reverse engineering, and an awareness of moments when media themselves, not exclusively human anymore, become active ‘archaeologists’ of knowledge” (p. 55). Though some approaches to media archaeology follow a chronological or narrative-driven approach to uncovering the historical elements of technology, others disconnect linear temporality, a human orientation, from the archaeology of knowledge. The temporality of archiving in the arena of digital media, specifically that of sonic material, takes on multiple meanings as digital media proponents consider the relationship between the cultural object or material that is being documented and the techno-epistemologies that are used for documentation. In his book, *What is Media Archaeology?*, Jussi Parikka (2013) argues that the assumed permanence of digital memory that comes with documenting and archiving artifacts and stories of cultural heritage through digital means, needs to be questioned, and that instead, coupling degeneration

with regeneration is the key characteristic of digital memory, as the process of archiving often degenerates an artifact while attempting to regenerate its accessibility and longevity.

Parikka (2013) names six examples of digital archaeology art, one of which he calls “Media,” which he defines as “archaeological art that draws from concrete archives—in other words, artistic practice informed by archival work and historical materials, a direct way of working like a historian but for artistic ends” (Parikka, 2013, p. 140). As a new area, media archaeology does not yet have a clear articulation of an artistic methodology; however, it is loosely identified by its looking toward digital media, media culture, history, technology, archaeology, and notions of time and space.

Parikka (2013) notes that since the 1990s there has been a genre of digital archaeology artists who take old media technologies and themes and resurrect them in a modern day context, often in galleries or museums, and online. The art projects’ hybrid theoretical inclusivity and resulting thematic inclusivity, highlighted by Parikka as a part of digital archaeology art, seems intuitively connected to the objective of developing and overlaying creative responses to cultural archival material toward the sustainability of cultural heritage and tradition (Parikka, 2013). My research seems to diverge from media archaeology at the moment, in the ways in which it is also focused on the living human elements inherent in ethnographic research, while scholars in the emerging field seem to be more focused at the moment on dissecting historical technological objects and technologies.

Building off of Foucault’s (1969) re-envisioned understanding of the archive, from concrete place to the archive as a condition of knowledge, this

dissertation looks at an approach to understanding the archive through digital media archiving, which considers a temporal approach to archiving that places relevant multi generational social ideologies from a cultural moment in conversation with and about historical objects and depictions of the same. Using the lens of media archaeology, I am interested in considering the hermeneutics of technologically informed theories of knowledge that might be extractable, and inversely embeddable, within creative work derived from digital ethnographic practices. This is to say that when digital approaches to observing and documenting communities, such as field recordings, are incorporated into digital media art that is made in response to research within a community, the resulting artistic practice arguably contains digitally archivable information about the community that was observed. My research therefore may serve as a way of further expanding on media archaeological practice by linking art and ethnography into the current conversation on history and technology.

2.2.2 Sound Studies

Much of the work that is characteristic of sound art has either gone outside or has the capacity to bring the outside inside.”

- Steven Connor (2011, p. 130).

The origins of sound studies stem from two key factors; the introduction of noise from the world around us in to the development of music, facilitated by the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in 1877, and a changing sonorous environment beginning in the early 20th century (Cox and Warner, 2004). The sounds of the natural environment changed incrementally with the advent of new technologies, the industrial revolution, cars, and the transition to a

more rapid paced world. Exploring the use of noise in composition was the entry into deeper philosophical inquiry of what music is, what sound is, how they relate to one another, and the experience of hearing through composition. As Douglas Kahn (2003) argues in his essay “The Sound of Music” in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, “you have two sources for sounds: noise, which always tells you something—a door cracking, a dog barking, the thunder, the storm; and then you have instruments...Music has to find a passage between noises and instruments” (Kahn, 2003, p. 83).

Numerous composers from the first half of the 20th century, including Luigi Russolo, Edgard Varèse, Henry Cowell, Jacques Attali, and Pierre Schaeffer, were in agreement that all sounds were important components of composition. While Russolo believed that music and noise were distinctly different entities, others like Varèse, Cowell, and Cage developed compositional styles that broke down these distinctions. In his 1929 essay “The Joys of Noise,” Cowell argued that not only are music and noise not in opposition with one another, but that noise is already always contained in music (Cowell, 2004, p. 22). Similarly, Jacques Attali wrote that “music, the organization of noise...reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society” (Attali, 1985, p. 4).

In 1914 Luigi Russolo, who believed “that the traditional orchestra was no longer capable of capturing the imagination of a culture immersed in noise,” created new noise-making instruments he called *intonarumori* (Russolo, 2004, p. 10). Composer Edgard Varèse, like Russolo, was interested in creating new musical instruments that could express a different type of sound. However, Varèse referred to music as “the movement of sound masses,” which removed

the previously existing distinction between music and noise (Varèse, 2004, p. 17). His compositions focused on frequencies, intensities, and the matter of sound including timbre, texture, and musical space, leading to his redefining of music as “organized sound.”

Pierre Schaeffer was a radio engineer and announcer who was fascinated by the way recoding and broadcasting changed how people could hear and listen to sound. Influenced by the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, founder of “phenomenology,” which “disregards the traditional philosophical distinctions between ‘subject’ and ‘object,’” in 1966 Schaeffer presented *Traité des Objects Musicaux* (TOM), his attempt at an analytical theory for sound based work. In TOM Schaeffer articulates four concepts of listening, 1. concrete music (*musique concrète*), 2. listening functions, 3. reduced listening, and 4. sound objects, which I will briefly describe here.

According to Schaeffer, *musique concrète* begins by valuing the concrete properties of sounds, which were attainable by reduced listening, which implies sound recording. These concrete sounds then moved toward abstract structures in performance. This approach is in contrast to the traditional western compositional style at the time, which valued beginning with an abstract idea and moving toward a concrete form in its performance. Schaeffer often recorded sounds of everyday life, and through processes of technological mediation and manipulation aimed to reduce and diminish any associative properties the sound might have that would connect it to the source of its creation. Schaeffer rejected his very first composition in the style, *Étude aux chemins de fer*, because the train sounds were too recognizable (Kahn, 2003, p. 82).

The four modes of listening are, Listening [Écouter], Perceiving [Oùir], Hearing [Entendre], and Comprehending [Comprendre]. Listening involves the recognition or identification of the event that produced a given sound. Perceiving is recognition of the sound for the sound itself, without looking for meaning in or interpreting the sound. Hearing is recognizing the properties of a sound, and comprehending entails the understanding of a message that is communicated or transmitted by sound (Almeida, 2014).

In 1948 Schaeffer broadcast his first concrete music composition, entitled “Concert de bruits,” which was a set of pieces composed entirely from recordings of every day objects like train whistles and pots and pans. The idea of the music object or sound object was derived from Schaeffer’s style, as “musique concrète pulls into its sonic net an entire array of sound sources, machines, and archives to condense all such things into a compact musical object” (LaBelle, 2015, p. 30). Schaeffer’s compositional method, which aims to disassociate sounds from their source or to make them unrecognizable, has been likened by Douglas Kahn in “The Sound of Music” to that of an abstract painting that distorts actual meaning. Francisco Lopez, Stephen Vitiello, and Jacob Kirkegaard argue that the listeners of Schaeffer’s work relate not simply to the sound, “but also the evidence of the artist’s intentions as they manifest in the sounds and their organization” (López et al., 2009, p. 126).

While Pierre Schaeffer helps us see the relationship between recorded sounds and composition, John Cage adds a new dimension to the exploration of composition by using sound in composition as a means of defining sonic culture. John Cage’s compositional style offered a new approach to making music in the second half of the twentieth century, which considered the relationship between

sound and music, and that utilized the found environment as a space for “renewed listening within a musical framework” (LaBelle, 2015, p. 3) Cage was interested in capturing and using the realness of sound in the world around us, and often played with sounds that were not traditionally considered musical; he composed pieces that drew into question the very essence of what music was. In 1937 Cage wrote *The Future of Music: Credo*, where he expressed his thoughts and excitement about using sound as a compositional tool. Specifically, he spoke of manipulating recorded sound effects for films, via a film phonograph, to produce rhythms. He said, “With a film phonograph it is now possible to control the amplitude and frequency of any one of these sounds and to give to it rhythms within or beyond the reach of the imagination” (Cage, 1937, p. 3). Cage’s experiments with sound took noises from the everyday and transformed them into “musical instruments” that could be used to create rhythms in time.

Thinking about a sonic culture helps us conceive of the importance of relationships between sound and culture, specifically the act of listening to the sounds, people, and space of a given place, and the way those sounds say something about the culture of that place. Furthermore, a consideration of the relationship between sound and culture compels us to listen to and for the culture beyond the sounds—and the silence—and into the cultural frameworks that make up the everyday of a given community. An inquiry into sonic culture helps to provide a conceptual framework for the making of music, and by extension, creative work, about a given culture that is tied to the sounds of that place. Cage’s composition, *4’33”*, a three movement composition for piano, which relies on the pianist closing the piano top and timing each movement in silence, is an example of how Cage’s work is important to sonic culture.; the composition

becomes about the sounds of the place in which the music is performed, and silence becomes a frame through which the audience becomes aware of their own sonic culture. *4'33"* becomes about the audience in the space at the moment of the performance, about them moving in their seats, uncomfortably responding to the silence, and about the sounds the audience makes being heard through the resonance of the space. This composition also exemplifies how Cage's compositions explored sonic culture by exposing music as both the thing and a reflection on the thing.

Cage's work also became known as a way of exploring and defining sonic cultures. LaBelle argues that Cage defines sonic culture through the way he positions music in relation to social space (LaBelle, 2015, p. 4). Cage is also known for conceptually framing every day sounds and human interventions in the development of music as "both the thing *and* a reflection on the thing" (LaBelle, 2015, p. 4). The thing is that which makes the sound, or perhaps the person who instigates the making of the sound. The reflection on the thing is the way that a composition or framing of everyday sounds provides a window into that which makes the sound or those who instigate the sounds, and shapes to some extent the way humans respond to the sounds they hear.

The sonic culture of each place is different, and in the case of *4'33"*, the 'silence' within each performance hall will sound different depending on the sounds the audience makes, the acoustics, ventilation, and the ability for outside sounds to enter the space. Silence, therefore is not a constant but rather changing variable, depending on each place. As Cage said in a video interview on February 4, 1991,

the sound experience which I prefer to all others is the experience of silence. And the silence almost everywhere in the world now is traffic. If you listen to Beethoven or to Mozart you see they are always the same, but if you listen to traffic you see that it is always different. (Cage, 1991)⁶

Cage's compositions therefore also set the stage for the consideration of temporality in music, and the importance of acknowledging our continually changing sonic environments.

Schaeffer and Cage were often inspired by the sounds in their natural environment. However, they are both interested in sound for the sound itself rather than the origin of the sound or the sounds' relationship to other things in the environment (López et al., 2009).

Musique concrete equally uncovers an entirely new set of musical possibilities, yet through very different means: whereas Cage aims for the here and now of sound beyond the mechanics of representation, musique concrete appropriates technologies of sound recording and reproduction in the constructing of musical work. (Labelle, 2015, p. 4).

For Schaeffer the exploration and inclusion of sounds was a key element of his compositional practice and style, bringing focus to the world of sounds around us, while for Cage technology was a key element in his compositional practice, stretching our understanding of sound and by extension music, through the technological exploration of sonic expression that allowed us to hear sounds differently.

⁶ YouTube Video of John Cage from February 4th 1991
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y>

In their engagement with sounds from the natural world, both composers speak to the relationship between sounds and space. As Brandon LaBelle (2015) tells us in his book *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, both Cage's and Schaeffer's work "define sonic culture by continually positioning music, either in relation to social space, as in Cage's project, or through methods of appropriation, electronic manipulation, and diffusion, in *musique concrète*" (pp. 3-4).

R. Murray Schafer, a composer and theorist who focused on environmental sound and noise pollution, was known for his work on "acoustic ecology," which he wrote about in his 1977 book, *The Tuning of The World*. Schafer founded the World Soundscape Project with the intention of documenting and analyzing the changes in environmental soundscapes through recordings over time. He and the World Soundscape Project popularized the term "soundscape." As previously mentioned in a discussion on Artists and the Archive, R. Murray Schafer coined the term soundscape in 1977 and argued that a soundscape is a document of a sonic environment in a particular moment in time (Schafer, 1977).

For the sake of this thesis I look toward a definition of soundscape provided by David Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello (2010) in "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology." Samuels et al (2010) propose that Schafer's soundscape and the idea of a landscape were analogous terms, "insofar as it attempted to contain everything to which the ear was exposed in a given sonic setting." Furthermore they suggest an implicit relationship between the soundscape and cultural practice. "Similarly, as landscape is constituted by cultural histories, ideologies, and practices of seeing,

soundscape implicates listening as a cultural practice” (Samuels et al., 2010, p. 330).

I utilize Schafer’s concept of a soundscape in my attempts to sonically explore cultural heritage, as well as archive and attempt to make relevant modern responses to these sounds. As Jonathan Sterne points out, “to think sonically is to think conjuncturally about sound and culture” (Sterne, 2012, p. 3). The concept of a soundscape gives us access to a particular culture through an often-unrecognized path; what we might ordinarily take for granted, like the sounds of everyday life, become important keys to unlocking knowledge about that culture, which is not readily visible. As an ordinary sensory experience, sounds are often forgotten about as a mode of observation. For this reason I have found that sound can be a powerful tool for developing focus and encouraging observation, and often takes the listener by surprise when he or she first listens actively.

While Schafer argues for the study of environmental acoustics, claiming, “total appreciation of the acoustic environment can give us the resources for improving the orchestration of the world soundscape” (Schafer, 1977) others like Paul Demarinis (2011), in “On Sonic Spaces,” suggest that it’s actually a study of acoustics and perceptions of sound in the process of sound recording that allows us to find hidden meaning in the relationship between sound, technology and culture. For Demarinis, sound recordings can be viewed as a porthole through which to make connections about human perceptions, technology and culture.

Alain Corbin (1998), goes one step beyond Paul Demarinis’ (2011) work by suggesting that a “soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a

way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world” (Corbin, 1998, p. ix). Similar to Cage’s explanation of sonic culture, which I mentioned earlier, Corbin describes the soundscape as a dynamic tool that is able to independently represent a place, such as a soundscape of a city, and act as a lens through which a person can explore or re-envision a place they are already familiar with. Corbin’s philosophy is important because it names the soundscape as a tool that is both capable of capturing culture—in his words ‘a world’—and simultaneously a tool that is capable of reflecting on that ‘world’ or culture. Corbin’s elevation of sound as a multi-dimensional tool for capturing and reflecting, serves as the foundation for how I attempt to engage with sound and soundscapes in my research. By using recordings of expressive cultural events and then creative artistic work that is then shared back with the community from where the expressive cultural events originate, my work aims to capture soundscapes and then reflect them back to the communities from where they came.

Brandon Labelle (2015) speaks of the value of contextual practice and “site-specific practice” in the development of creative work. He argues that historically we can see the importance and value of grounding creative work in the historical context of place and space, which is what I aim to do with the development of artistic work from sonic field recordings of sensitive expressive culture. By “sensitive expressive culture,” I mean any type of social behavior with an aesthetic dimension. Specifically I use the term to refer to festivals, celebrations, religious traditions and recitations, and performance. Sensitive expressive culture, is an aspect of social culture that has an aesthetic dimension, and which can be documented. Labelle claims:

The understanding that art brings with it the possibility to address the world, beyond an abstract or elusive category, can be seen to gain significance throughout the latter part of the twentieth century in the form of 'site-specific practice' of the late 1960s and 1970s and subsequent forms of contextual practice. Such methodologies produce artwork that, rather than separate itself from the space of its presentation, aims to incorporate it into the work, from material, such as architectural features, to informational, as in the governing curatorial premise behind an exhibition or larger social and cultural conventions. (LaBelle, 2012, p. 468)

Labelle's (2012) claim suggests that "site-specific practice" has far-reaching implications on the space in which it is conducted, and that the space can also have an impact on the artistic work because 'site-specific practice' aims to incorporate itself into a space rather than separate itself from it. Labelle's claim is relevant to my work particularly with regard to the latter point he makes that "site-specific practice" as a methodology has the ability to bring together the artwork and place within which it is created by way of larger social and cultural conventions. This matters to my work because I bring field recordings of a place, back to a place after re-contextualizing the work through creative practice. Showcasing the creative work back in a site-specific environment, in my case the community from which the recordings were taken, is an approach that would allow my creative work to again become integrally related to the space and place from which the origin recordings were taken, and would allow the new creative work to become re-connected and incorporated into the community. I might argue that displaying the creative work back within the community where the ethnographic research was conducted makes the work relevant to the community.

Building on Alain Corbin's (1998) work, Emily Thompson (2002) argues that a soundscape plays a role in a listener's relationship to their environment and that a soundscape has more to do with civilization than nature, which supports her assertion that soundscapes are constantly undergoing change (Thompson, 2002).

As I discuss further in the three case studies, one of my overarching reasons for making field recordings and developing soundscapes or sound installation art from those recordings is my desire to help sustain cultural heritage in a given moment in time. My work therefore acknowledges, as Thompson (2002) suggests, that soundscapes are constantly undergoing change, and that it is therefore important and valuable to capture and document a given soundscape in a given moment in time. For, as Demarinis (2011) suggests, each recording will contain a unique archaeological guide to the relationships between people, sounds, culture, and technology. Hence, my work focuses on creating soundscapes that a community can interact with, as well as simultaneously reflecting on the value of capturing the soundscape and that interaction as a snapshot or archaeological guide to that place in that moment in time.

Numerous authors have argued that the changing environmental soundscape of the world precipitated changes in listening (see Russolo (1913), Thompson (2002), Corbin (1998), Schafer (1977), and LaBelle (2015) for examples). However, other authors have suggested that the ability and practice of recording sounds is responsible for what we hear (see for example Demarinis (2011), Lucier (1979), and Furlong (1994). In his 1977 essay "The Soundscape," Schafer argues that it is a pre-occupation with the world soundscape, motivated

heavily by a rise in noise pollution, and an interest in the “relationship between humanity and the sounds of its environment” (Schafer, 1977, p. 3), that governs many related areas of study in the sciences and humanities of the time, including psychoacoustics, otology, aural pattern perception, and noise abatement practices. DeMarinis, as well, references early phonographer’s experiences of listening back to recordings on foil and wax cylinders as the origin of sound art, soundscape, sound sculpture and sound design. He explains that when phonographers recorded one sound, three could be heard. The first was the sound itself, the second was inadvertent sounds of the environment, and the third was the sound of the recorder or machine noise (DeMarinis, 2011, p. 74). The last two sounds, environment and machine noise, also gave way to what was later referred to by Paul DeMarinis as surface noise, or channel noise, an indication that recording was happening. This, in turn, paved the way for an understanding of a new type of silence, recorded silence, which became the focus of many composers in the 1970’s, most popularly, as I discussed previously in this section, John Cage.

2.2.3 Sound Art

Over the course of the past forty-five years, Sound Art has emerged as a new area of artistic exploration. Numerous authors have argued for and against the existence of a distinctive category of art-making called “Sound Art” (see for example Furlong (1994), Lander (1990), Cox (2006), Neuhaus (2000), and Licht (2007). Many scholars and composers, including Sternes (2012), Thompson (2002), Furlong (1994), and LaBelle (2015) agree on the merits and possibilities

of the art form, which often relies on the process of using recordings of every day noises or sound to develop artistic work. In his 1994 essay, "Sound in Recent Arts," William Furlong writes about the creative benefits to using sound as an artistic medium: "this failure of sound to construct a distinct category for itself has in fact proved an advantage, given that categories in the end become restrictive and the work circumscribed and marginalized" (Furlong, 1994, p. 128). His statement is consistent with Schafer and Sterne, who highlight the experimental and explorative nature of working with sound as part of the appeal of the field. As Furlong claims, "The attraction for the artist of working with recorded sound no doubt resided in its characteristic of maintaining an integrity with regard to the relationship between the moment of recording and the subsequent hearing" (Furlong, 1994, p. 128). This tension between attempting to maintain the integrity of the original sound and creating something new with it is at the heart of the activist intentions and ethical considerations behind this dissertation. As I discuss more fully in my chapter on the Theyyam Festival for example, the tension between the recorded sound and what is heard allows for the work of shifting awareness, as I attempt to make listeners hear and think differently about caste issues through the development of soundscapes.

In his essay "Sound Art?" Max Neuhaus (2000) argues rather strongly that sound art, which began in the early 1970's, was not truly a new genre or area of art but rather became a way of classifying art based on a medium. He said, "I think we need to question whether or not 'Sound Art' constitutes a new art form" (Neuhaus, 2000, p. 1). He argues that this approach to exploring sound is reductive and unfortunately misses real opportunity in the exploration of the sonic. He says, "in art, the medium is not often the message...much of what has

been called 'Sound Art' has not much to do with either sound or art" (Neuhaus, 2000, p. 1). Ten years before Neuhaus's critique, Dan Lander (1990) suggested that the art of sound could not be easily identified because of sound's historic ties to music, stating that "if a critical theory of sound (*noise*) is to develop, the urge to 'elevate all sound to the state of music', will have to be suppressed" (Lander, 1990, p. 11). Christopher Cox (2011) echoed this same sentiment in his essay "From Music to Sound," where he argues, "however rich and important were the reconceptions of sonic being and time undertaken by Feldman, minimalism, experimental music, improvised music, and DJ culture, they remained somehow bound to the discourse and practice of music" (Cox, 2011, p. 8). The tension inherent in formalizing a relationship between music and sound, or noise, continues in my research as recordings of religious festivals and traditions bring an additional layer of complexity into the equation. Recordings of traditional recitations that are not considered to be musical within a given community may be considered musical from the perspective of a musician or listener outside of that particular culture. My research considers these recordings as sound recordings of religious events, and then develops composed soundscapes with these recordings that attempt to both honor the sacred nature of the sound, while simultaneously separating listeners' previous associations with the sound in order for them to hear the sounds newly.

Dan Lander (1990) argues that sound art has unique potential because of its reproducibility, while others like Cox (2011) in "From Music to Sound," Neuhaus (1992) in his permanent installation "Times Square," and Alvin Lucier

in his famous 1969 recording *I am sitting in a room*⁷, suggest that it's sound art's focus on issues of time and space that make it relevant and important. Lander described what he felt were the potential merits he imagined sound art could bring. Specifically, he reflects on the way sound art can blend and bend notions of time and space with regard to exhibiting or displaying sound work. He argued that sound has unique potential to that of paintings or sculptures, in that the work itself can be reproduced on tape and distributed to multiple locations, allowing the work itself to be experienced in multiple places simultaneously. Reflecting on his sound installation work, Neuhaus said in an interview, "the important idea about this kind of work is that it's not music. It exists in time. I've taken sound out of time and made it into an entity" (Neuhaus, 2002). Cox (2011) further clarifies the distinction between music and the subject of sound art by arguing that "the real distinction is between two kinds of time: *pulsed time* (the time of music and meaning) and *non-pulsed time* or *duration* (the time of sound matter itself)" (Cox, 2011, p. 10).

While Lander (1990), Cox (2011), Furlong (1994), and Neuhaus (1992) help us see how time and space are key elements in the emergence of sound art, Brandon LaBelle (2015) adds to the understanding of sound art as a distinctive category through his articulations of the historic movement away "from the time of sound, and towards its spatial location" (LaBelle, 2015, p. 151). In *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, LaBelle writes about how the development of Installation Art in the late 1960's and early 1970's helped to further orient sound art as a distinctive art form: "the developments of sound installation provide a

^{*7} In Alvin Lucier's 1969 recording of *I am sitting in a Room*, Lucier reads a text aloud in a room while recording it, then while playing the recording back in the room he records the playback. He then repeated this process.

heightened articulation of sound to perform as an artistic medium, making explicit 'sound art' as a unique and identifiable practice" (LaBelle, 2015, p. 151). He argues that the spatial and environmental elements of sound lead to the popularization of sound installation, which placed the listener inside of a space created from sounds that were found and recorded in the everyday world. LaBelle goes on to provide a working definition of sound installation, claiming that it "brings together sound and space in a provocative and stimulating manner, often appropriating architectural elements and construction, social events, environmental noise, and acoustical dynamics, in and out of the gallery, while drawing upon musical understanding" (Labelle, 2015, p. 151). LaBelle also suggests that Installation Art inspired the integration of visual and sonic materials, as is exemplified in works by sound artists like Max Neuhaus.

Combining visual and sonic materials allows for a non-immediate association between the audience's aural sensibility and their visual awareness, which is very different from that experienced when watching a film, where the visual and sonic are intertwined. Humans are better trained at receiving visual stimuli, and as a result make sense of the visual more easily than the sonic. For this reason, combining visual and sonic material allows the audience member to make meaning of the soundscape more easily, because they can use their more familiar visual sense to guide them. As I show in my case study chapters in this dissertation, creating exhibits that combine visual and sonic materials allowed me to present an audience with complex sonic material that served as a commentary on cultural assumptions that may not have otherwise been understood. In some cases, these soundscapes incorporated unrealistic sounds, or edited and manipulated versions of the natural sounds to an extent that they

may not have been easily identified as related to their natural sound source, if the visuals had not been in place.

In 1969 Schafer created the term “schizophonia,” which describes the purposeful dislocation of a sound from its origin or natural environment, and can also mean a change in the time or amplitude of a recorded sound, for example the amplified reproduction of a sound in its natural environment. The term comes from the Greek prefix “schizo,” meaning, “split” or “separated,” and “phono,” meaning, “sound.” Schafer intentionally created a name that carried an anxious tone, in order to call attention to the fact that, as he believed, the world’s soundscape has become polluted, and that learning to un-hear sounds is critical to the future of music creation. Schizophonia was symptomatic of the development of sound recording and transmission technologies, which made it possible for a sound to originate in one place and be transmitted to another. A musical performance or political speech could take place far from one’s home, but could be listened to in one’s living room on the radio. In fact, in 1969 Schafer wrote a book entitled *The New Soundscape: A Handbook for the Modern Music Teacher*, where he suggests that the existence of technology has made listening to music live an unfamiliar experience for many. Furthermore, for Schafer, listeners are that much further away from an original sound experience when they listen to a recording of it because recording is always a form of translation of the original. As Schafer highlights, “... no recording is an exact reproduction of living sound. Distortions are introduced in both its production and its playback” (Schafer, 1969, p. 45).

I employ a schizophonic approach to soundscape development in my research by recording archival sounds, and then manipulating those sounds in an

effort to bring elements of the social environment to the forefront. As Andrew J. Eisenberg (2015) tells us in *Keywords in Sound*, “Schaferian soundscape-related concepts have also been operationalized in socio cultural analysis, particularly in ethnomusicology (Eisenberg, 2015, p. 197). This aspect of Schafer’s compositional philosophy becomes a useful tool for the work of ethnomusicology, which derives social meaning and cultural understanding from musical and sonic elements of a culture, because it allows ethnomusicologists to explore the soundscapes of a culture holistically, which can reveal important insights that the exploration of individual sounds of a culture may not. In my research, I draw on the ways in which ethnomusicologists explore sonic environments through social and cultural analysis. Schafer’s concept of the soundscape as a translation or reproduction of the original, informs the way in which I call attention to the elements of translation and interpretation in recording by developing creative work from that soundscape and using that creative work to help me document and understand the cultures I am observing and participating in.

Schafer’s concept of “schizophonia” is useful in talking about soundscape and sound art installation work because if we understand recorded sound as a crucial component of soundscapes and a key building block in developing sonic environments, rather than simply the replication of a sound, then we can understand utilizing field recordings of soundscapes as an inherently schizophonic process in that the recordings of a sound environment have been split from that environment through the act of recording, and then again when they are put into a gallery or installation environment separate from the source of the sound. In my own work on soundscape design for the Theyyam and Sonic

Storyboard projects, using field recordings in a schizophrenic context is crucial to the artistic development of a work that aims to challenge the way people hear sounds that are familiar to them and which originate in their familiar environments. These installations build on Schafer's notion of the schizophrenic in that the resulting soundscapes aim to separate sounds from their natural environments and re-contextualize them in a gallery environment targeted toward people who are from or familiar with hearing the live ambient sounds in their natural environment. The development of soundscape in my work is akin to Emily Thompson's redefinition of soundscape as "simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment" (Thompson, 2002, p. 1). The soundscapes I create rely on schizophrenic techniques as a way of filtering the audience's experience of a common sound, so that they can hear it fresh. As Andy Eisenberg suggests, schizophrenia has previously been used in this way, particularly by ethnomusicologists, to "provide a way of thinking about the relationships between emplacement and social orientation, particularly in contexts of social struggle and transformation" (Eisenberg, 2015, p. 198). Because of their disruptive nature, schizophrenic soundscapes, then, have the potential to be powerful agents of social change, in their capacity to highlight nuanced as well as dramatic disturbances to an otherwise familiar soundscape, which can help bring focused attention through sonic disruption. As I discuss more fully in the case study chapters, my experiences working with the Theyyam artists in Keezhara, as well as the Lest We Forget Project, have allowed me to see how capturing soundscapes and re-contextualizing them for the community from where they came, in order to highlight a social issue or nuanced idea, allows for the community's response to the revised soundscape to become an

important artifact of that community, in that moment in time. As Steven Connor states, “Sound art... has typically sought to expand beyond the gallery, to ventilate the gallery with the sounds of what lies outside it, or to temporalize place” (Connor, 2003, p. 50).

In the spirit of Steven Connor’s essay (2003), “Ears Have Walls,” my dissertation is an attempt to explore the ways that recorded sounds can be manipulated into soundscapes and put in conversation with communities from where the sounds originate, in order to explore a community’s relationship with that sonic environment and social and cultural issues of the time. In addition my work relies on creative process to temporalize a moment in that community’s history that can contribute to its sustainability. My research looks toward approaches in sound studies that have activist potential, like that of schizophrenic soundscape development, to fuse creative approaches in soundscape development with ethnomusicological and digital ethnography techniques. The intended outcome is the development of artistic work rooted in scholarly inquiry, and scholarly work that relies on artistic practice. The resulting research is as interested in the social and cultural frameworks of a given community, as it is with the power of the creative process to activate change. There is an innate relationship between the exploration of culture through ethnography and our ability to understand culture through art. My research attempts to explore that connection.

2.2.4 Arts Research

Peter Weiss (2005) first developed the term 'artistic research' in his book, *Aesthetics of Resistance*. Scholars like Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab (2012) agree that artistic research is an attitude and not a method or discipline. In their recent book, *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, they argue that artistic research can transcend divisions that are often erected between disciplines. "We believe that artistic research should not be seen as a discipline or a topic, nor is it really a method. For us, it is an attitude, a perspective, a manner " (Dombois et al., 2012, p. 11). Their argument comes almost 20 years after scholars like Frayling (1993) and Seago (1995) made important contributions to the development of the study of artistic research by exploring methodological approaches relevant for artistic scholarship.

Dombois, Bauer, Maries, and Schwab (2012) represent the current trend in conversations about arts based research where artistic practice is valued as research not for its methodologies or alignment with research in scientific disciplines, but rather for the unique contributions of creative research, which are often absent within other disciplines. Dombois, et al., make the argument that the artistic practitioner as researcher is able to be effective in conducting hybrid research that overlaps varying disciplines, and which does not prioritize disciplinary allegiance as part of its inquiry or analysis. They state,

After reading this volume, it seems to us that artistic research is an activity for border-crossers who, when negotiating frontiers, carry out their research somewhat differently from those who expand knowledge by inflating known

territories or by registering a new claim in the hope that they will strike gold while keeping others out. (Dombois et al., 2012, p. 11)

This dissertation is an attempt to write a scholarly research paper about artistic practice as research, which transcends several disciplinary divides, and draws on these disciplines' core methodologies and ideas as a way of grounding my research.

Some authors, who argue for the importance and validity of artistic research as a viable form of analysis and inquiry, focus on the methodological approaches best suited for arts practice based research. Below I will further discuss the ideas of Christopher Frayling (1994) Peter Dallow (2003), Anthony Dunne (1999), and Alex Seago (1995). However, other authors have suggested that artistic research is an attitude rather than a method or discipline. Below I will further discuss the ideas of Peter Weiss (2005), and Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab (2012). I will discuss in-depth the merits and applicability of these scholars' ideas to the field, and my research.

Peter Dallow (2003) argues that arts based research methods need to be thought of like scientific methods, as critical to the expansion of artistic thought. Christopher Frayling (1994), on the other hand, in *Research in Art and Design*, and Alex Seago (1995), in *Research Methods for MPhil & PhD Students in Art and Design: Contrasts and Conflicts*, suggest that it's not comparing arts based research to other forms of research but rather questioning the very nature of the concept of research that is most critical to supporting student's artistic practice. When research is thought of critically as a tool in support of inquiry, then a discussion of how artistic practice can best serve as a tool for creative inquiry can best happen, and approaches to doing so can be identified. Unlike Frayling,

who argues that ascribing the concept of research to the arts is fundamentally a political move bearing no benefits for the arts, Seago suggests that the concept of research in the arts is important and arts based researchers should develop their own unique methodologies for making art rather than looking toward scientific methodological approaches as a guide for how critical inquiry should happen in the arts. Frayling and Seago's contributions have been crucial to changing the discourse about arts based research, from a comparison to scientific, social scientific, and humanist research approaches and methods, to one that attempts to gain legitimacy for the arts to self define what they create and how. Still what is missing from the research on arts based practice methods is an approach that can sit within a more traditional discourse as well as outside of it. Meaning a way of utilizing traditional methodological practice to legitimize artistic research, while finding approaches to developing artistic research methods that truly support artistic research, rather than stifle the development of artistic scholarship. What is needed is an approach that combines the free-thinking non-research orientation of Frayling's approach with the arts centered methodology design of Seago's, essentially a method that does not define itself as research in the traditional sense and that is crafted uniquely to the needs of arts practitioners for the purposes of having a methodology that can live both within and outside of an academic setting that supports the development of artistic work, but which does not limit that work to the process or method through which it is made.

In *Representing Creativeness: Practice-Based Approaches to Research in Creative Arts*, Peter Dallow (2003) discusses the importance of defining a place for practice-based art research within the more traditional canon of scientific,

humanitarian, and social science research. Dallow argues that practice-based research is critical for the evolution and expansion of artistic thought and the movement, tying research in the arts to the more traditional scientific model of research, whereby the aim of new research is to make contributions to the field of science, in his model it is for research in the arts to make contributions to the field of art. Dallow's thesis is widely echoed by scholars like Seago (1995) and Dunne (1999), who focus on teaching methodological practices to arts-based practices; however there are scholars, such as Christopher Frayling (1994), who would argue that there are inherent contradictions in trying to apply a more traditional methodological approach like that used in the sciences to the practice-based arts, and that having a methodological focus should not be the aim for practitioners in the Arts.

In his paper *Research in Art and Design*, Frayling (1994) argues that within the academy there are many contradictory views about the value of arts practice as research, citing the example of famous artistic practitioners receiving honorary doctorates for their creative works from universities that do not offer PhDs in the practical arts. Frayling points to distinctions between the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of research with a little "r," meaning 'the act of searching closely or fully, and Research with a big "R," meaning 'work directed towards the innovation, introduction, and improvement of products and processes.' He concludes, "that prior to the turn of the century the word research carried no specific scientific meaning – indeed it predated the division of knowledge into arts and sciences" (Frayling, 1994, p. 1). Frayling brings into question the motivation to call arts-based practice, research; asserting that in this day and age the word research often has more of a political than practical

meaning. He states, “True, research has become a political or resource issue, as much as an academic one...Research has become a status issue, as much as a conceptual or even practical one” (Frayling, 1994, p. 5). So why does it seem that within the practice based arts there is an imperative to show or prove the value of arts based practice as research? Looking at my own research, I am aware of the pull Frayling highlights—to identify methods to legitimize my own arts based work as valuable research that contributes to the expansion of knowledge within my field. However, not all artists feel a similar affinity or pull toward needing to prove the validity of their artistic work through the frame of scholarly research.

In *Research Methods for MPhil & PhD Students in Art and Design: Contrasts and Conflicts*, author Alex Seago (1995) relates the experiences of his arts and design students within his methodologies course. He notes that many arts students in PhD programs have little to no background in methodologies and initially reject the area, as traditional methodological approaches feel narrow and limiting, which is inherently contradictory to their values of creative practice. Seago recognizes that traditional methodologies often are not well suited to arts based practice and questions the best way forward:

This raises epistemological questions about whether researchers in art and design should adopt and adapt methodologies developed in other academic disciplines or whether they should concentrate upon developing unique and original methodological techniques which recognize the distinctive quality of discovery of art and design. (Seago, 1995, p. 5)

Seago’s research suggests that traditional methodology is not the best way forward for research rooted in arts based practice and in fact, relying on such

traditional frameworks becomes incredibly limiting to the student's potential for creative discovery in their own research.

However, he believes and highlights the critical role of methodological critique in conducting original research work in the arts. "It is particularly germane for students to understand the crucial link between methodological critiques, the development of hypotheses and the collection of data via the researcher's chosen methodology" (Seago, 1995, p. 5). Therefore Seago believes heavily in the importance of identifying or developing a methodology within which to root one's arts based research, and he draws correlations between the scientific method of developing a hypothesis and collecting data via a methodological approach. He does however, not believe that relying on a scientific method or a method developed for use in a discipline other than the arts encourages the best research work in art and design.

As Seago and Dunne (1999) tell us in their paper, "New Methodologies in Art and Design Research: The Object as Discourse," researchers in the arts and design are often perplexed when learning about traditional methodological approaches as their own work does not neatly fit into these approaches:

The danger in this is that perplexed researchers in art and design will opt to play it safe and, rather than risking the development and defense of really original hypothesis and methodologies characteristic of 'fundamental' research work, will choose (and be admitted into art school research programs because they have chosen) academically acceptable and supervisable research topics with methodologies culled from established academic disciplines. (Seago and Dunne, 1999, p. 11)

This outcome is in direct conflict with the notion of original arts research that looks toward the creative process as a foundation from which to develop questions and analytical inquiry.

Dombois, Bauer, Mareis, and Schwab's (2012) concept of "artistic research" to describe an approach and attitude to the development of art is useful because it aims to describe the process of inquiry and analysis each artistic piece undergoes in the process of development. If we understand art as a crucial entry point into one's intellectual analysis, rather than simply a creative outcome, then actively engaging with artists' work becomes a way to enter and understand a new attitude toward knowledge. In my own work on developing sound art projects that attempt to capture a current moment in time—toward the larger goal of sustaining a community's cultural heritage—creating these soundscapes becomes both an artifact of the intellectual process of fusing sound with historical memory, as well as a representation of a creative process that considers sound art, ethnography, and archiving as relatable disciplines that have important things to share with one another. Developing sound art for the sustainability of cultural heritage, then, becomes an important bridge between activism through art, and studying cultures and communities through sound.

2.3 Section Three: Ethnographic Research

2.3.1 Ethnography

I have used ethnographic methods to collect the data in this research. Each of the three case studies in this dissertation relies on engagement with a

community, observation of expressive cultural practices, and field recordings taken in these communities. I will discuss how in some cases, such as the Lest We Forget project, my relationship to the community was developed over a number of years, and in the Sonic Storyboard Project, relationships with members of a community were developed over a few minutes. In all the relationships however, conversations with the members of each community heavily informed the direction of my written and artistic research.

The origins of ethnography come from 19th century Western Anthropology, where it was seen as complementary to ethnology, the comparative study of non-Western cultures. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnology was considered the core of anthropological work and was usually conducted by missionaries and travellers, not anthropologists; however over time anthropologists began conducting their own fieldwork, and in time the term ethnology was less commonly used. Ethnography came to mean the “the integration of both first-hand empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). In the early twentieth century, anthropological ethnography became one of the models of research adopted by Western sociology, and in the first half of the twentieth century, sociologists at the University of Chicago popularized ‘case study’ an approach to studying human social life that was developed out of ethnography. In the second half of the twentieth century ethnographic practice spread into other disciplines and from the United States to other parts of the world. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

In 1996, Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley wrote *Shadows in The Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, in which they defined

ethnography as the “observation of and the description (or representation) of cultural practices...Fieldwork is the observational and experiential portion of the ethnographic process...Fieldwork distinguishes ethnographically based disciplines from other approaches in the humanities, and social sciences” (Barz and Cooley, 2008, p. 4). In other words the ethnographic process entails conducting observational fieldwork within a community and then describing the expressive cultural practices you observe.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) moved away from a definition that placed disciplines in relation to ethnography, and instead defined ethnography largely by focusing on what ethnographers do, recognizing that the term ethnography can vary in its meaning and is not used in a standard fashion. They highlight that while ethnography is complex and it is difficult to give one definition that captures all of its meaning, this is not unusual. Hammersley and Atkinson outline five features that ethnographic work usually contains. These features are summarized as follows.

1. People’s actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher.
2. Data are gathered from a range of sources including documentary evidence of various kinds, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.
3. Data collection is, for the most part, relatively ‘unstructured’.
4. The focus is usually on a few cases, generally fairly small-scale, perhaps a single setting or group of people.
5. The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider contexts.” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3).

Karen O'Reilly (2012) offers a definition of ethnography that differs from Barz and Cooley (2008) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) in that she focuses on the process of the practice of ethnography. In her book, *Ethnographic Method*, O'Reilly posits, "that ethnography is a practice that evolves in design as the study progresses; involves direct and sustained contact with human beings, in the context of their daily lives, over a prolonged period of time; draws on a family of methods, usually including participant observation and conversation; respects the complexity of the social world; and therefore tells rich, sensitive and credible stories" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 3). Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, and Jo Tacchi (2016) consider O'Reilly's approach to ethnography for its application to a digital ethnographic world. While incorporating O'Reilly's definition, they posit that ethnography is: "iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods...that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role that views humans as part object/part subject" (Pink, 2016, p. 3). O'Reilly's definition allows for the ethnographic research to serve as a tool in the identification and development of a methodological approach for the research, which very importantly allows the process of research within a particular community to inform the research process, and to impact the research by allowing its focus and direction to ebb and flow with the ethnographic findings. This approach more accurately represents the type of ethnographic practice I aspire toward, and is in line with the ethnographic case studies you will read about in this paper.

Ethnography generally takes its theoretical base from the home discipline of the researcher, who uses their disciplinary theories in conversation with

ethnographic materials. In this dissertation, I will specifically highlight Digital Ethnography, a strand of ethnographic practice, as the methodological approach I use, particularly for its openness in linking ethnography and theory, and not assuming one particular disciplinary theoretical framework (Pink et al., 2015). Rather than relying strictly on ethnomusicology, for example, to provide the theoretical framing for analysis of my ethnographic practice, I aim to have multiple theoretical frameworks in conversation with the ethnographic research and one another. In this case I specifically look toward theory in Digital Media, Applied Ethnomusicology, and Archival Studies.

2.3.2 Digital Ethnography

Digital Ethnography is a more recent approach that considers the role digital media plays in shaping ethnographic research techniques, while recognizing that technology and digital media are a part of the every day, and by exploring the digital world through an approach that relies on a non-digital-centric approach to the digital. By this I mean an approach that does not use the digital world to explain the digital elements of ethnographic inquiry but rather to explore the digital world by using more traditional theoretical inquiry. In their recently published book, *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice*, authors Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis and Tacchi (2016) discuss what Digital Ethnography contributes to the field of Ethnography. Digital ethnographers, they claim, “are interested in how the digital has become part of the material, sensory and social worlds we inhabit, and what the implications are for ethnographic research practice.” The authors also suggest “ways of

acknowledging and accounting for the digital as part of our worlds that are both theoretical and practical and that offer coherent frameworks through which to *do* ethnography across specific sites and questions. (Pink, et al., 2016, p. 7). I find the explanation provided by Pink, et al. to be pertinent to explaining why I have chosen to use Digital Ethnography as the method for analyzing my research. My research is interested in how the digital world, specifically digital media and artistic techniques available today, serves as a framework for conducting ethnography across different sites, while asking related but necessarily different questions about cultural and religious traditions. My research considers how the digital media tools I use become a part of the material, and social worlds I study, and how the artistic work developed through these digital tools can impact ethnographic research.

Formative work exploring the impact of the digital on ethnography and attempting to define the field, primarily took shape in the fields of sociology and anthropology. Scholars in Digital Sociology explored transformations in digital media that resulted from the 'digital age', see for example Sherry Turkle (2005 and 2012) who writes about the impact technology has had on human relationships and socializing, and Laura Robinson and David Halle (2002) who write about the extent to which technology and specifically digitization transforms the ways people engage with and access the arts. Digital anthropology took shape in a similar fashion, with scholars interested in how approaches to using digital media impact ethnography, including the use of mobile phones, social media, and networked community activism. See for example, Ilana Gershon (2010) who conducts an ethnography of Facebook and other new tools her students were using to end relationships, and Haidy Geismer

(2013) who researches the way digital technologies, catalogues and representations are altering our museums.

Christine Hine's (2000), *Virtual Ethnography*, is often credited with beginning the discourse on new ethnographic methods born out of the digital age, though there were a number of authors throughout the 1990's that touched on similar themes including Shelley Correll (1995) who writes about an electronic Lesbian Bar developed from a computer bulletin board system, Nancy K. Baym (1999) who writes about fandom and online communities, and David Hakken (1999) who presents an argument for the validity of ethnographic studies of cyberspace.

Hine's (2000) book began a discourse about the consequences of the digital world on ethnography as well as the new areas of consideration and inquiry brought about by digital innovations. For this dissertation I rely on the definition of digital ethnography provided by Pink et al., (2016), an approach to doing ethnography in a contemporary world...[it] also explores the consequences of the presence of digital media in shaping the techniques and processes through which we practice ethnography, and accounts for how the digital, methodological, practical and theoretical dimensions of ethnographic research are increasingly intertwined" (Pink et al., 2016, p. 1). I find this definition particularly germane to my research in that it references the role digital media plays in shaping ethnography in present day, and acknowledges how doing research within a contemporary world can lead to greater interconnectedness of the theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects of ethnographic research. These observations resonate within my own research, as I explore the ways that digital media art can impact the sustainability and

preservation of cultural heritage, which directly explores the interconnectedness of the digital world, ethnographic research and methodology, and theoretical dimensions of culture, heritage, and preservation.

Digital ethnography as an area of inquiry considers the role that digital environments play in redefining ethnographic research. This inquiry has led to many new considerations within ethnographic practice, including the development of new innovative methods, such as digital ethnography, the questioning of how methodologies are redefining ethnographic research, questioning how old concepts are impacted by a new digital ethnographic practice, and the proposal that practice and analysis are equally relevant and practiced equally often. (Pink et al., 2016).

I will also define the terms *expressive culture* and *collaborative ethnography*, which speak to the ethnographic methods I use in my research. Expressive culture” is a term I apply to the ethnographic elements of my research in that it refers to the cultural heritage and religious traditions that I observed within the three case studies. Harris Berger (2010) defines expressive culture in his book, *Stance: Ideas about Emotion, Style, and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture*. Berger explains that the term expressive culture is used by scholars in a wide range of disciplines to refer to any type of social behavior with an aesthetic dimension. This includes genres traditionally studied in the humanities such as music, dance, theater, and painting, but also every day forms of aesthetic practice like storytelling, jokes, dress, graffiti, and ritual (Berger, 2010). The term adeptly captures the cultural and social nature of an event while also recognizing the aesthetic and artistic dimensions of that same event. I found the term useful in thinking about how the events I observed, such as the

Theyyam Festival, were sites in which cultural and religious meanings intersected with artistic and aesthetic values.

Collaboration is a critical piece of the ethnographic process, particularly in my research, where I collaborate with the community as well as artists. For the purpose of this study, I will rely on Luke Lassiter's definition of collaborative ethnography as a guideline for the type of collaboration that I strive for in the artistic collaborations discussed in this research:

While collaboration is central to the practice of ethnography, realizing a more deliberate and explicitly collaborative ethnography implies resituating collaborative practice at every stage of the ethnographic process, from fieldwork to writing and back again. Many ethnographers have done this before, and their collaborative work – regardless of their theoretical trajectories – provide us a point of departure for beginning an in-depth exploration of the history and theory behind a collaborative ethnography. (Lassiter, 2005, p. 15)

Collaborative ethnography therefore pushes collaborators to work together on every aspect of the ethnographic research process, not only the writing up of field notes. In my own collaborations I have attempted to follow Lassiter's approach of collaborative ethnography, in order for the process of collaboration to be as unified and rich as possible. True collaborative ethnography is difficult to achieve, but I think I have come closest to this in my collaboration with Dhanaraj Keezhara, where we engaged in the ethnographic research project together from start to finish. We traveled on trains together, ate together, and conducted field research together, we then brainstormed ideas, and shared samples of our creative work with one another.

2.3.3 Ethnomusicology

Anthony Seeger defined ethnomusicologists in the forward he wrote for Laurent Aubert's 2007 book, *The Music of The Other: New Challenges of Ethnomusicology in a Global Age*, as "specialists in the study and often the presentation of music from different parts of the world – [who] were among the first to pay close and serious attention to the musical traditions of distant places" (Aubert, 2007, p. vii). Laurent Aubert, in the same book, describes ethnomusicology as follows:

The term Ethnomusicology, as we understand it, implies a relation between music and society...Ethnomusicology results from the confrontation and overlapping of two cognitive approaches that we can consider irreducible; its theoretical and practical validation is located in the wrench between the two, as indicated by the juxtaposition of the prefixes 'ethno-' and 'musico-'." (Aubert, 2007, p. 9)

For Aubert, the tension between an approach that seeks to relate music and society and an approach that seeks to relate the theoretical and practical sides of music is the key to the value of ethnomusicology, as it means that in order to explore music and society we must explore both the theoretical and practical components of each. Another way to say this is that the process of ethnomusicology ensures a system of checks and balances between the research of a musical tradition, and the social structures that support that tradition. My research borrows from ethnomusicology in that it explores a type of relationship between society and sonority, through field based exploration and theoretical analysis of elements of that fieldwork. However, my research does not focus

exhaustively or solely on music; rather it is interested in sonic elements of expressive culture and society, and ways of using those sonic elements to make art that can reflect back relevant social issues and serve as a marker of that act of expressive culture, embedded with information about the social and historical moment in which it was documented.

Initially ethnomusicologists explored the process of creating recordings from musical traditions they were studying, by recording and reproducing musical traditions on wax cylinder and then records. These recordings were mostly shared within the scholarly community, and as a result only heard by a thousand or so people (Aubert, 2007). Beginning in the 1970s there were overlaps between artists and ethnomusicologists, which initially took the form of Western popular musicians, like Paul Simon, on his album *Graceland*, which featured Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and on which he invited musicians from around the world to play, as well as join them live on stage. As Aubert states, “Suddenly ethnomusicologists were no longer controlling the dissemination of world music: they were engulfed in a flood of it produced by others” (Aubert, 2007, p. viii). My dissertation offers a different approach to artistic creation that borrows from musical and sonic traditions of expressive culture from India and the Middle East, whereby the output or creative product is intended to be put back into circulation in the communities from where the initial recordings came, and which aims to preserve and sustain cultural traditions captured within the creative work.

In “We’re all Archivists Now: Towards a More Equitable Ethnomusicology,” Carolyn Landau and Janet Topp Fargion (2012) suggest that the creation of ‘culture brokers’—a role often taken on by ethnomusicologists—has been born

out of this desire to reunite archival materials with the communities from where the material came. They also suggest that it is a mistrust of large government institutions that has led to under developed public collections and wide growth of private collections, as ethnomusicologists have also mistrusted large organizations with their field recordings (Landau and Fargion, 2012). Perhaps this understanding of mistrust of government institutions makes ethnomusicologists good culture brokers, as they can better understand the way the communities in which they conduct their research may view them.

In similar studies, Emma Brinkhurst (2012) and Carolyn Landau (2012) were interested in understanding how reconnecting members of London's Somali and Moroccan communities, respectively, with archival recordings from their native communities could evoke memories and stimulate discussion and performance toward reclaiming culture and identity. As Landau and Fargion (2012) explain, the culture broker must develop the same type of trust and mutual respect as ethnomusicologists, as there are difficult barriers that must be broken down between the archival institutions and the community groups.

This movement to reunite audio-visual archives with members from the communities from where they came is interesting and understandable, but also raises questions about the development of new collections and archives in present day. My research looks at an approach to the development of creative projects rooted in ethnographic research. I argue that these creative projects, which are developed from field recordings of expressive cultural events, are relevant to modern day archives. The process of taking present day field recordings, and from them developing creative projects that aim to begin conversation, inquiry, or spark memory for members of the community from

where the recordings were taken, fuses the intended outcomes that ethnomusicologists like Brinkhurst (2012) and Landau (2012) are currently researching, being a culture broker for a community--a role that large museums and institutions often fail to successfully fulfill, and use field recordings as a tool to stimulate meaningful discussions of memory and culture with a modern day approach to collecting archival recordings and materials.

My research does not attempt to directly respond to a call for the living archive, currently a hot topic at conferences and within journals such as that of IASA, the International Association of Sound and Audio Visual Archives, where archivists and ethnomusicologists express their struggle to connect people with archival materials from their communities. Rather my research attempts to develop new collections of archival recordings and artifacts from expressive cultural events in present day, which is not dissimilar to the inclinations of archivists and ethnomusicologists. This is to say that this research aims to help communities develop and create new material for a prospective future collection or archive that self-consciously aims to include the voice of the community within the archival material before it ever reaches an archive or place to settle.

2.3.4 Applied Ethnomusicology

Applied ethnomusicology, a subfield of ethnomusicology, is a discipline that has created a space in the discourse for conversations about the relationship between applied research and scholarship and social and ethical responsibility within ethnographic research. "In October 1998 the Society for Ethnomusicology inaugurated its Applied Ethnomusicology Section with the aim of "joining scholarship with practical pursuits by providing a forum for discussion and

exchange of theory, issues, methods and projects among practitioners.”⁸ In 2006 the International Council for Traditional Music established its Applied Ethnomusicology section with the following definition: “Applied Ethnomusicology is the approach guided by the principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts.”⁹ Applied Ethnomusicology therefore has a somewhat activist bent, in comparison to its parent discipline, ethnomusicology.

Some authors have noted the activist merits of applied ethnomusicological research, including Dan Lundberg (2015), Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (2015), and Carolyn Fargion (2009). In “Archives and Applied Ethnomusicology,” Dan Lundberg explores the history of Sweden’s Folk Music Commission. He explains that similar collecting projects were ongoing in European countries from the nineteenth into the early twentieth centuries, many with the intention of demonstrating each country’s uniqueness and cultural specificity. Lundberg goes on to say, “an important function of archives is to provide the raw materials for a constant, ongoing reconstruction of history, and this reconstruction always reflects the collectors’ and users’ ideas and values. All interpretations of the past are impregnated by, and filtered through, the ideologies of their own time” (Lundberg, 2015, p. 673). Lundberg’s argument is that the intention behind the forming of a collection, necessarily influences the way the collection is organized, which then influences the way future

^{*8} See http://webdb.iu.edu/sem/scripts/groups/sections/applied/applied_ethnomusicology_section.cfm (accessed 16 January 2012)

^{**9} See <http://www.ictmusic.org/group/applied-ethnomusicology> (accessed 16 January 2012)

generations will interpret the materials within it. He is also pointing out that a value behind contributing raw material to the archive is for future generations to make revised meaning of the materials.

My research takes Lundberg's argument one step further, by proposing that while the raw material remains relevant to the archive, the augmented material should also be included in the archival collection, as it represents important information documenting the particular generation's interpretation of the raw material, which as Lundberg suggests, captures the ideologies of the time. This move means that a collection does not only represent material of a particular generation but also the perspectives of future generations, which can provide information about changes within particular communities over time, through the raw material, as well as indications of factors of the time that may contribute to changes.

Some ethnomusicologists have argued that preservation is tantamount to their discipline, including Barz and Cooley (2008), Aubert (2007), and Steven Feld (1982). However other ethnomusicologists have more recently suggested that preservation is broader in scope than simply recording, documenting and submitting material to an archive, and should be extended to include *the facilitation of the continuation of a tradition*, see for example Fargion (2009). While Fargion argues that the continuation or sustainability of a tradition is part of the role of preservation for ethnomusicologists, others like Lundberg, in "Archives and Applied Ethnomusicology," go one step further to suggest that it's actually both to facilitate the continuation of a tradition, and inherent to that, the role of deciding which traditions' continuation is facilitated, and which is not because they have not been collected (Lundberg, 2015, p. 681). While Fargion

and Lundberg's contributions have been crucial to changing attitudes about the purpose and intention of preservation within ethnomusicology, as well as opening up the discourse to include the importance of sustaining cultural traditions, what is missing from the research on sustainability of traditions is a way to go about making traditions more sustainable and whether or not it is realistic to consider that ethnomusicologists can do this alone for all traditions. What is needed is an approach that combines the sustainable preservation from Fargion's research with the recognition that not all communities' traditions are being documented from Lundberg's research—essentially, a method that considers the type of field research that is viable for helping to sustain traditions, and which considers how artistic research on communities and traditions can help cast a wider net over the traditions that are being documented. I attempt to do this in my research by partnering ethnographic research and artistic practice through digital mediums, to make the argument that the resulting creative work captures important and essential aspects of expressive culture and heritage that can serve to sustain these traditions. I also make the argument for why it is important that these types of creative projects be included within archival collections about these traditions, as they capture a temporality and spatiality of a particular community's cultural heritage and a particular moment in time.

3 Theyyam

3. Theyyam

Consciously or not, the quest for the other in its difference is always also a quest for oneself by way of the other.

—Laurent Aubert, 2007

3.1 Section One: Introduction

3.1.1 Introduction

My ethnographic research and documentation was conducted during the annual Theyyam festival in Keezhara, a small village in Kerala, India. I will provide an overview of a visual art exhibition, *Everyday Life: A Repertoire of Ritual and Performance*, developed by my collaborator Dhanaraj Keezhara and myself, in response to the festival and its relationship to caste marginalization within Keezhara. While the purpose of the *Everyday Life* exhibition was to attempt to mitigate caste discrimination, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand the ways in which creative response to field recordings might work differently than more traditional archiving.

3.1.2 My Artistic Collaborator

In February 2013, I traveled to Keezhara, a small village in the Northern Malabar region of Kerala, India, to observe the Theyyam Festival with my friend and collaborator, Dhanaraj Keezhara, a visual artist. Theyyam is a ritualistic Hindu festival celebrated annually in Keezhara; as I learned from the members of the community, the festival dates back roughly two thousand years, to when

people first inhabited the Northern Malabar coast of Kerala. During the week-long devotional event, village members pray to the gods to help them make peace with the native animals and daemons of the land, so that they may settle there without being killed. The festival is notable for its costuming and face paint, and most importantly for its performances, which often reenact conflict between humans and animals that dates back to when the land was settled.

Dhanaraj was interested in the topic of caste marginalization. Specifically his art explores how the Theyyam artists who come from the lower caste of Keezhara society, and who are embodied by gods during Theyyam, are revered during the festival but not during the remaining 51 weeks of the year. We decided to collaborate and create an exhibition in response to the Theyyam festival. I collected sound recordings (as well as photographs and field notes of my observations and experiences) of the festival, with the intention of creating a soundscape that might highlight the juxtaposition of how the lower caste was treated inside the festival and out, and which would accompany Dhanaraj's visual artwork. Our aim was to bring focus to the festival performers in a new way, to disrupt the destructive discourse toward these members of the community, and to transfer some of the respect gathered for the Theyyam artists, during their temporary godliness, to their permanent embodiment as members of the village.

Throughout my experience of the festival and the creation of the exhibition, I was driven by the question, could our exhibit—our creative response to the festival—be successful as a form of activism? And more specifically, could the use of technology and digital archiving help address caste marginalization in Keezhara, in ways traditional archiving might not? Is there something about

creative response that offers a new view toward established societal customs that moves beyond recording into the realm of activism?

Dhanaraj Keezhara is from Keezhara, Kerala, where he was raised until he attended Arts College in the nearby city of Kannur. Dhanaraj was born under the name Dhanaraj Madhavan after his father's family name, and decided to change his legal last name to Keezhara because of a very strong connection to his village roots.

After attending Art college, Dhanaraj moved to Bangalore, where he and his family have been settled since. Dhanaraj returns to Keezhara annually for the Theyyam festival, and is intimately familiar with the details of the complex folkloric festival as well as with the members of his village who are part of the performance and the musical families responsible for continuing the tradition of the festival.

Dhanaraj and I first met in 2007 while I was working in India as a recipient of the William Jefferson Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. He was the art teacher at Christel House India, a non-governmental organization (NGO) school on the outskirts of Bangalore, and the school's liaison to the Adobe Youth Voices (AYV) project. I was living and working in India at the time on the launch of AYV. Adobe wanted to extend their program to India and partnered with the American India Foundation (AIF), the NGO where I worked, to do so. AIF already had established relationships with schools, and had outfitted several government schools with technological infrastructure and computer teachers to run new classes.

The project entailed re-contextualizing Adobe's AYV curriculum to fit the Indian context, and launching it within 15 schools in Bangalore and 10 in Delhi.

The work required frequent travel between Bangalore and Delhi in support of trainings, regular school visits to conduct lessons, technical and field support in photography, film, and media, and project assessment, which was sent back to Adobe for grant monitoring purposes. The first year of the AYV India project successfully concluded in late 2008, shortly after which I moved back to the United States.

In 2012 I traveled back to Bangalore and met with Dhanaraj about collaborating on an artistic project focused around the Theyyam festival. At the time, he and his family—his wife, Nisha, and their children, Teju and Sidu—were celebrating Vishu, the Malyalam (Keralan) New Year. As we sat on his living room floor with his family, eating delicious homemade food off large bright green banana leaves, we developed a plan for a joint exhibition on the topic of caste marginalization and Theyyam.

Much of Dhanaraj's own creative work had for years been inspired by the festival, and more recently centered around his interest in caste marginalization. Our collaboration began with discussions about the margins, gaps, and spaces within community structures, which help us understand our relationships to one another. Dhanaraj's ongoing body of visual artwork, which he calls "Truth in the Margins," includes paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, mixed media work, and watercolors. This work is inspired by the idea of people living in the margins of their communities, and this initial seed began our conversations about the possibility of our artistic exploration of the relationship between Theyyam and caste marginalization.

We continued our artistic collaboration remotely, communicating primarily over e-mail and occasionally Skype. Often Nisha served as a translator of language and ideas when necessary.

3.1.3 Keezhara, India

There are fourteen districts in the state of Kerala, which is considered part of South India, a region made up of four states: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Southern India is united by linguistic similarity rooted in Dravidian languages, which includes Tamil, spoken in Tamil Nadu; Telegu, spoken in Andhra Pradesh; Kannada, spoken in Karnataka; and Malyalam, spoken in Kerala. The village is predominantly Hindu, with two temples, Koolam Bhagavathy, the large main temple grounds in the village, and the much smaller Vijana Poshini Granthalayam, located one kilometer up the main road.

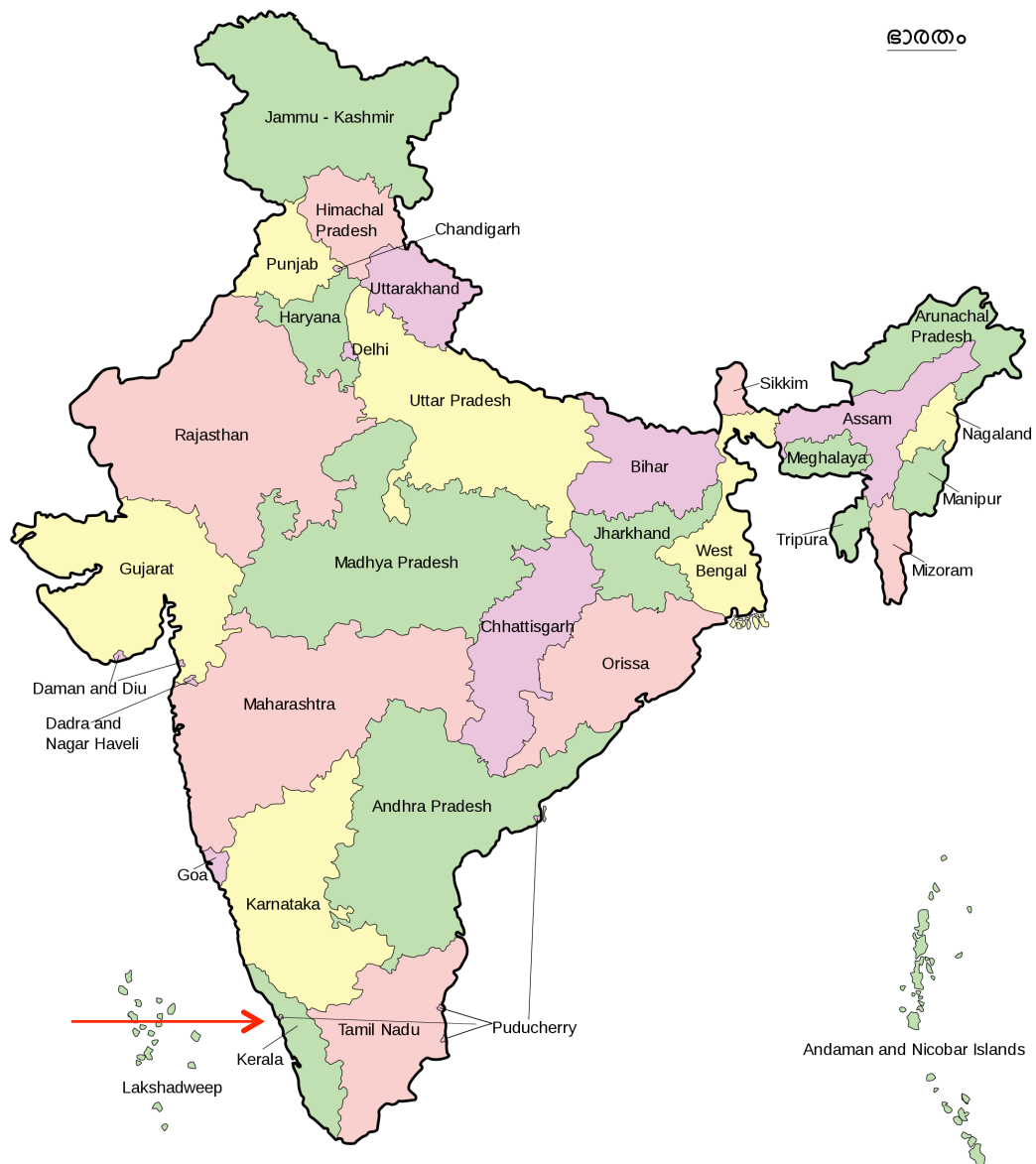


Image 3.1 Map of India (Source: <http://www.worldmapv.tk/india-map-26/> Accessed Oct 30, 2015)



Image 3.2 Map of Kerala (Source: <http://maps.newkerala.com/kerala-travel-map.php> Accessed Oct 30, 2015)

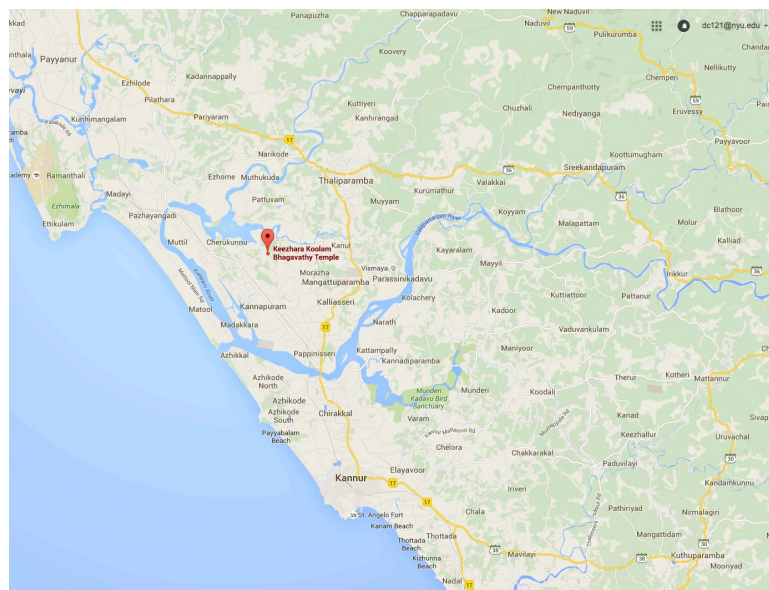


Image 3.3 Map of Keezhara Koolam Bhagavathy Temple (Source <https://www.google.ae/maps/place/Keezhara+Koolam+Bhagavathy+Temple/@11.9475738,75.3901148,12z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x3ba4159e73f466fd:0xc7c9c9f3736ce0c4?hl=en> Accessed October 30, 2015.)

3.1.4 The Theyyam Festival

“Teyyam” is perhaps a corruption of the Sanskrit word “Deivam,” meaning a deity.

In the Teyyam, [or Theyyam] ritual, specialists wearing elaborate costumes seek to portray the deity, which can be a god or the spirit of a famous personage long deceased. The specialist is believed to have invoked the spirit of that deity or ancestor into himself through some specific ritual acts and then virtually becomes the embodiment of the deity or spirit. In this altered state, he is a god and is considered as such, and he is believed to bear immense power to prophesy, bless and heal. There are numerous Teyyams – of gods, goddesses, ancestors or famous personages both male and female. (Gabriel, 2013, p. 4).

According to Gabriel, the performers are born into Theyyam performance families, and are members of the Niche Jatis caste, one of the lower castes of the village, also referred to as Pulayas. The Niche Jatis have for centuries been tasked with carrying the Theyyam traditions forward, passing on the dances, oral recitations, and traditions from generation to generation. The performances are intergenerational, with the more senior members of the families taking on the more challenging performances and costumes.

According to the legends portrayed at the festival, Theyyam has a rich history of folklore that chronicles the stories of those first settlers of the land, their conflict with the animals and nature, and their relationships with one another and the Hindu gods to whom they prayed to make peace with the land. The traditions of the festival include storytelling, dances, music, sacrifices to the

deity, spirit possession, and costuming. Theyyam artists have maintained and passed the traditions of the festival along to younger generations over time, and are the only people within a community who are allowed to perform the traditions of the festival, as they are believed to be able to participate in spirit possession.

The most defining characteristic of the Theyyam Festival is that it assumes of the performers and the villagers an agreement and understanding that during the festival, the human performers are embodied by gods. Therefore all worship of the performers is worship of a godly embodiment. It is likely that this unique element of the festival has been at the heart of Theyyam from the onset: “In ancient times the people of Kerala preferred to worship Gods through human representations rather than as images, or idols” (Gabriel, 2013, p. 17).

There are many types of Theyyam, including Theyyam of male and female deities, as well as of ancestors. Within the festival there are numerous Theyyam characters represented, which differ by community as the Theyyam artists have different stories that are passed down within their families based on the experiences of their ancestors, their caste, and the land from where they descend. It is said that there were once over 400 different Theyyam characters, and in present day only half of those are still performed.

Theyyam is one of the cultic and ritualistic arts of Kerala, a place with a long history of performing arts. The relationship between Theyyam artists and dominant culture has been entwined with issues of caste marginalization and the complicated expression of caste status reversal. “Every Theyyam draws into its fold pantheistic practices, along with casteist affirmations that helped the

marginalized classes claim a space for themselves, and assert their social links with the land of their dwelling” (Trikaripur, 2014, p. 17).

Theyyam is rooted in the land of Malabar, and many traditions reflected in the festival are tied to the nature and rituals of the land. In the Keezhara fish tradition, fishermen from the village spend one entire day of the festival fishing only one particular type of small silver fish from the river at the edge of the village. As I witnessed during the festival, on this day no one else is allowed to fish, and once the fisherman have caught the desired number of fish, which usually takes them from sunrise to late afternoon, they rush these fish back to the temple as a sacrifice to the gods. The fish are then given to the people of the village to eat. Trikaripur Sreekanth describes this as “[a] total performance, it is an incredible coming together of faith based ritualistic celebration of not only religion, but the cultic and the natural and is integral to the consolidation of the different communities and faiths that are knit into the social fabric of *Malabar*” (Ibid, p. 17).

Since the village of Keezhara is the focus of this research, I will limit my exploration of specific Theyyam characters to those I uncovered through research in Keezhara. During the weeklong festival, artists tell the stories of the individual Theyyam characters and recite the oral traditions of the festival. The presentation of each Theyyam character is broken down into three different public-facing performances or traditions: the *Thottam*, *Vellatam*, and *Theyyam*.

The ritual process has three clearly demarcated stages. In the first, the Teyyam [Theyyam] appears with very little costuming. This is the torram [Thottam] (from the Sanskrit *stotram*, meaning praise) stage in which the Teyyam will sing songs praising the deity or the spirit involved and recounting

its history and legends, connecting with it. Only a single drum will be the accompaniment. This is called the *Ilamkolan* (Young Kolma). The kolakkaran then returns to the concealed costuming area and reappears with some more costuming and performs other elements of the Teyyam ritual and performance with more drummers and musicians accompanying the ritual. This is known as the Vellatt [vellatam] stage. Returning to the costuming arena, the Teyyam comes back with full adornments and costuming as the full-fledged Teyyam. These stages can be compared, according to K. K. Marar, to infancy, youth, and maturity of a person's life (Gabriel, 2013).

It is worth noting here that Vellatam are the childhood versions of the male Theyyam, however there are also female Theyyam in the form of goddesses. Elamkolam is the childhood version of female Theyyam characters. In Keezhara all Theyyam artists are men, even when representing a goddess; costumes for goddesses often include chest plates with breasts that men will wear. There is one village in North Malabar called Thekkumbad where women can perform a particular Theyyam called the Sthree Theyyam. At present there is one woman from this community who performs, and traditionally these trainings are passed on from generation to generation so if she had a daughter she would train her daughter to perform the Sthree Theyyam.

The Thottam marks the beginning of the cycle of a particular Theyyam. In this performance the Theyyam wears a very minimal red costume, with dabs of face paint, and recites the story to the beating of a single drum or sometimes three drums for moments of emphasis. This is where the Theyyam recites the narrative of the story of the Theyyam character, through ritualistic chanting, which elders in the community say have originated in Sanskrit. However,

because the stories are passed down through oral tradition practices alone, and in a language that is not spoken in modern-day Keezhara, the current Thottam is an indistinguishable rhythmic narrative that is not linguistically comprehensible to anyone I met, including the Theyyam performers.

The early evening of the same day, as the sun is about to set, marks the performance of the Vellatam or the child version of the Theyyam character. The Vellatam is adorned in costuming made up of a headpiece, and face and body paint specific to the particular Vellatam. This performance often involves dance with robust musical accompaniment, some element of fire, and multiple temple minders and other helpers, as the Vellatam's embodiment is more profound and behavior more erratic than its older Theyyam counterpart.

In the late evening of that day, or early morning of the following day, the Theyyam performance occurs. The Theyyam is the mature version of the same character portrayed in the Vellatam, and as such is in a more robust costume, often accompanied by a more dynamic headpiece and full face and body makeup. The face makeup is highly intricate for the Theyyam performances, and the performer will often wear metal pieces on their face, which serve as key identifiers of the Theyyam character, and complement the face paint for the costume. The Theyyam performances are often much more tame than the Vellatam performances, and the Theyyam appears to be more embodied in these performances—that is, they often speak in what sounds like tongues, walking slowly with some sudden movement. The following day the Thottam of the next Theyyam character begins, and a new day's Theyyam cycle takes shape.

3.1.5 Embodiment and Caste Marginalization

Marginalization, or discrimination based on caste, has its roots in traditions of the Hindu caste system; however, this is complicated when viewed through the lens of the Theyyam festival. The Keezhara Theyyam artists come from an “untouchable” caste, the Pulayas, who have historically been agricultural indentured servants who worked in the rice paddies. (Osella & Osella, 2000). During the festival, Theyyam artists are embodied by Hindu gods, and the villagers pray, worship, and give money and offerings to the Theyyam, as they believe them to be gods. Some Theyyam characters like the Muttapan, are considered community prophets with healing powers. Villagers line up by the dozens to make an offering and hold the Muttapan’s hand to receive words of guidance and healing for children or family members, including finding a suitor for their child, the health of a partner or parent, and others for money to repay debts.

During the Theyyam festival, it is widely understood that the Theyyam artists have an elevated status within the village. In addition to payment and offerings, villagers will often help make food for the artists throughout the day, while the artists are busy preparing for the day’s performances. The artists’ families are busy around the clock reciting the Thottam, preparing their costumes, face, and body make-up, and coordinating performances and dances. During the remaining 51 weeks of the year, the Theyyam artists are understood as existing only in their human forms; they are Pulayas, untouchables, and are treated as such by their fellow villagers.

In Keezhara, marginalization is tied to the artists' Pulaya caste status. The caste system, a ranking hierarchy within Hinduism, is particularly complicated in Kerala.

The caste ranking hierarchy of Kerala most closely resembles sociological ideal type conception of the Hindu caste hierarchy in that almost every caste group is said to occupy a unique and practically unquestioned rank, either higher or lower than the rank of each local caste group. (Alexander, 1968, p. 1071).

K. C. Alexander goes on to explain the descending hierarchy, starting with the highest-order caste: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Antaralajati, Sudra, Kammala, Patita Jati, Nicha Jati, and finally the Extra Jati. The Pulayas, part of the Nicha Jati caste, are considered to be pollution within a community; in fact the word *pulaya* originates from *pela*, meaning birth and death pollution. (Alexander, 1968).

J. J. Pallath articulates one explanation of these complicated dynamics, asserting that the Theyyam Festival creates an environment that supports a caste status reversal between the Pulayas and the upper caste, but that the specific way in which that reversal plays out within the Theyyam festival favors the caste hierarchy and does not alter or disrupt the power structure, but rather reinforces it:

The ritual status reversal practiced in the *theyyam* performance, forms an effective defense mechanism both for the *Pulayas* and for the upper caste.

The *Pulayas* overcome their unconscious fear of the landlord [upper caste] by identifying themselves with the latter, and the upper caste overcome the fear of the spirit world by allowing the *Pulayas* to identify themselves with the evil spirits. In this way the upper castes believe that the

terrifying objects can be divested of their power. For many depth psychologists, identification also means replacement. To draw off power from a strong being is to weaken the being. Such rituals of status reversals are thought of as bringing balanced mutual relation between the social structure and *communitas* once again to affirm the social structure. (Pallath, 1995, p. 184).

This description gives a glimpse into the on going complexity of caste dynamics rooted in institutional systems of hierarchy that are suspended and appended during different moments throughout the year. The outcome is an overall collusion with dominant majority marginalization of the lower caste communities, tempered with a nod to the Theyyam festival, which is seen as a weeklong subversion of the hegemonic system. In our artistic collaboration, Dhanaraj and I developed work that aims to address and at times subvert village caste dynamics in Keezhara. The exhibition used sonic and visual interpretations of tangibility and touch-ability, as a way of bringing focus to the humanness of the Theyyam artists during the festival, an aspect of their identity that is often overshadowed by the extreme costuming and body paint from which the Theyyam characters are born. This complex symbiotic dynamic creates resistance toward change or recognition of continued injustice within inter-caste dynamics in Keezhara (Pallath, 1995).

As Pallath asserts, the Pulayas and upper caste villagers see their Theyyam roles as important references for one another's lives outside of the festival; in fact, it seems that the symbiosis achieved through the festival plays a role in their ability to live harmoniously. The Pulayas' role as embodied gods elevates them to a status that allows them to temporarily experience the privileges afforded the

upper caste, while no longer fearing the upper-caste individuals themselves. For the upper-caste community, their involvement in the festival (i.e., giving money, requesting advice and prayer from the Pulayas) helps to mitigate their fears of the spirit world. As Pallath tells us, while these role reversals bring harmony, they also serve to reinforce the social structure of the community.

If we do not assume that this role reversal leads to a harmonious outcome necessarily, and instead recognize the positional relationship between the upper castes and the Pulayas, as Pallath suggests, we can further explore the complexities of these caste dynamics and consider the role Theyyam can play in combatting them. For example, it is still the case that any balance and harmony achieved through Theyyam does not sustain itself throughout the year. Pallath (1995) suggests that the relationship between the upper castes and the Pulayas during Theyyam supports understanding of one another's social positions and is tied to a siphoning of power or weakening of the other. Through their identification with the upper castes during Theyyam, the Pulayas weaken the power the upper castes have over them. The upper castes allow their fears to be overcome through their identification with the spirit world, represented by the Pulayas, and in so doing overcome some of their fears. The challenge of course is whether it is even possible for intersubjectivity when the Pulayas are seen by the upper castes in such extremes: they are either gods or devils, and this binary, as Pallath tells us, is navigated by magical thinking more than rational thought.

3.2 Section Two: My Personal Journey

3.2.1 The Story of My Journey

On February 14, 2013, I traveled with Dhanaraj; his wife, Nisha, and their children, Siddharta (Sidu), and Tejaswini (Teju), to his native village of Keezhara, where we spent one week participating in the Theyyam festival, community gatherings, family reunions, dinners, and documenting and recording the experience. I flew from Abu Dhabi to Calicut, Kerala, arriving at 3:30 in the morning. I took an ambassador taxi¹⁰ from the airport to the Calicut rail station, where I waited for the Theyashanthpur-Kannur Express to arrive, roughly an hour and a half later.

I had arranged to meet Dhanaraj and his family on the train, which they had boarded in Bangalore the night before. I knew from previous experience that negotiating the trains in India can be difficult, depending on the conditions. Trains are the most common and popular form of long-haul transportation in India, and are often delayed. At times they will only stop at a station for a minute or two before taking off to the next station. I knew I would likely have only a minute or two to get myself, my backpack of clothing, the orange case with my equipment, and the shoulder bag with cabling onto the train car, and I was hoping to find the right car, sleeper car 8, rather than having to walk through and between train cars. I also knew that if Dhanaraj could not find me, he would worry that I had missed the train or, worse, the flight.

The train arrived and Dhanaraj jumped off and was equally hurried in searching for me. Luckily I had positioned myself relatively near to where

¹⁰ The Hindustan Ambassador is a car that was made by the Hindustan Motors Company in India, and modeled after the Morris Oxford series III model by the British Morris Motors limited. (From the Wikipedia page on the Hindustan Ambassador) The Ambassador was commonly driven by the British in India, and became recognized as a prestigious car representing government, ambassadors, and dignitaries. Today the Ambassador is still used as a dignitary car, and due to the numbers of the cars that were produced between 1958 and 2014, particularly in the south of India, it is also used as a taxi and company car in some places.

sleeper car 8 stopped and was able to head directly toward him with my things. Relieved and tired, having traveled all night, I was glad to see Dhanaraj and Nisha, who had reserved a bed for me with their booking. We chatted for a bit and then all went to sleep, as there were still two hours left until the train was to reach Kannur. Siddharta woke me fifteen minutes before our stop, and I could hear the familiar monotonous but rhythmic calls of coffee and chai wallas as they walked the aisles of the train cars carrying large steel containers of sweet warm beverages on their shoulders. We had coffee, collected our belongings, and negotiated getting off the train; luckily, as Kannur was the last stop, there was ample time to get everyone and everything off before the train began to move. The five of us piled our things into an ambassador taxi, and the driver took us the 13 kilometers to Dhanaraj's family home in Keezhara.

Dhanaraj, Nisha, Sidu, Teju, and myself all stayed at Dhanaraj's family home, where his mother still lives. The house is an old-style Kerala home made of mud walls and concrete floors. Within the house there is a main common room, two bedrooms, a small storage room located off the side porch, which Dhanaraj uses as an office space, a small attic off a step stairwell next to the dining room table, where some relatives slept when they stayed over, and one bathroom off the second bedroom. The kitchen is just inside of the back patio across from the well. I was given the bedroom that had the bathroom attached to it as a place to sleep. Dhanaraj and Nisha slept in the second bedroom, and Dhanaraj's mother, Sidu, and Teju all slept on floor mats laid out in the living room. Though this sleeping arrangement made me feel uncomfortable, as Indian hospitality sometimes can, largely because Dhanaraj's 60-plus-year-old mother was sleeping on the floor instead of in the bed I was in, I had learned from my time in

India that hospitality toward guests was extremely important and that my assumptions of what was comfortable or appropriate did not match what Dhanaraj's family thought them to be. Needless to say, even when several relatives stayed the night, I never moved out of the room I was placed in, nor was I asked to share, despite having volunteered to sleep in the living room with the children.



Image 3.4 Dhanaraj's Childhood home in Keezhara



Image 3.5 The room where I stayed



Image 3.6 The living room



Image 3.7 Nisha in the kitchen

After our arrival that first morning in Keezhara, we rested, ate, and settled in, as the first night of Theyyam performances was to take place later that

evening. Dhanaraj's mother, slender with bright silver hair and a kind but quiet demeanor, made us all lunch as we recuperated and bathed. Dhanaraj and Nisha took me on a walk through the village. We cut through the back woods of the house and were shortly on the main road that snaked through the village, directly across from the Goddess Bhagavad Kali temple.

Adjacent to the temple is a field that is used for celebrations and festivities. As we walked down the road, passing the main bus stand, which is directly in front of the temple, we stopped to say hello to everyone. Dhanaraj and Nisha seemed to know everyone in the village. We continued down the road for a quarter mile and stopped at the village library. The building was small and modest, but the inside was painted with wild and bright colors and designs, many resembling Theyyam characters, and one wall was covered in a mural of children sitting together and reading books. Dhanaraj had guided the children in painting the murals on the library walls. The space is now used for teaching and workshops throughout the year.

We continued another half mile down the road, stopping at least ten times on the way to speak with and be introduced to villagers and Dhanaraj's childhood friends. Many of Dhanaraj's friends had, like him, relocated to cities for employment opportunities. When asked, they all said how happy they were to return annually for Theyyam, to see friends, and have time together. They were all curious about why I was in Keezhara, and also interested that I lived and worked in the United Arab Emirates, as most people I met in Kerala had a family member or friend who was working in the UAE. The conversations often skewed toward working outside of India, as that was what we had in common, and how the influx of foreign money into Kerala was raising the cost of living.

Dhanaraj told me that it would be important for me to give money to the head of the temple for my participation in Theyyam. I was interested in what this exchange of money was for, as Dhanaraj and I, though collaborators artistically, had never discussed matters of money. I asked him how much money I should give the temple, and he responded by saying, "As you like." He said that it was okay, meaning above board and very much the right thing for me to do, and that he would take me to the temple. I again asked how much money I should bring to the temple, and this time Nisha, Dhanaraj's wife, stepped in and said 500 rupees would be the right amount. This hesitation to discuss money with friends is something I have experienced with all of my Indian friends, and seems to be rooted, from what I can tell, in a sense of hospitality where one takes care of the financial costs when hosting a guest, paired with what seems like a social stigma about discussing money (This of course is not the case when haggling for groceries at the market.).

The conversation brought to the forefront my financial privilege, and the resulting dynamics on our collaboration. What business did I have waltzing into Keezhara and participating in their festival? And what business did I have entering into an artistic collaboration with Dhanaraj in the first place? For starters, our entire collaboration had revolved around my visits to India, as access to visas and the cost of travel were more within my grasp than Dhanaraj's. To give a sense of this financial disparity, one airline ticket from Abu Dhabi to Calicut, Kerala, is roughly 75% of Dhanaraj's monthly salary, and roughly 5% of mine. This means that the pace of our collaboration and exhibitions, as well as the process of collaborating at all, are contingent on my ability and willingness to travel to India. I have been aware of this dynamic from the beginning of our

collaboration, which made me feel a great sense of responsibility in not letting our e-mail exchanges or conversations lapse, and certainly to always keep the dialogue very open and focused on ideas and collaborative interests, so that both Dhanaraj and I would be guiding the ultimate outcome of our projects. On the flip side, I was also aware from conversations with Dhanaraj that his collaboration with me, while rooted in artistic interest and motivated by a creative prowess to explore new modes of expression, was also advantageous in gaining his work access and publicity because I was a foreigner.

We did discuss the possibility of proposing an exhibition of our work in Abu Dhabi, given I work there and the city has a very high population of expatriate workers from Kerala. In this configuration Dhanaraj would come to Abu Dhabi as an artist-in-residence. This has not yet materialized for a variety of reasons, including Dhanaraj's preference for working within communities in India, and the reality that the art scene in the U.A.E, is still under development with the Abu Dhabi Louvre currently under construction, and the Abu Dhabi Guggenheim, and Zayed National Museum pending construction. Additionally, given the high numbers of migrant laborers from Kerala in the UAE, the subject matter of the exhibition could be considered very relevant particularly for the expatriates from South India, but its focus on a Hindu tradition may make it a less viable pitch for a gallery, since Hinduism, while recognized on visa applications to Abu Dhabi, like Judaism, is not entirely supported by the government, like Judaism.

Many of the people I met in Keezhara spoke limited English, and I do not speak Malyalam; however I can speak and understand basic Hindi, so I was able to communicate with some of the people I met, especially those who had traveled to or had lived in the north of India, where Hindi is the dominant language. Hindi

is also taught in the public schools in all of South India, as it is one of India's national languages, along with English. Dhanaraj's wife, Nisha, and their teenage son Sidu both speak English very well and served as informal translators.

One of the Theyyam artists, the son of one of the more senior performers in Keezhara, who was probably close to forty years old himself, told me about his experience moving to Delhi for ten years to work. When I asked him why he moved back, he said that it was difficult to be away and that there were fewer young people who were training as Theyyam artists because the younger generations were moving away to big cities. He said he needed to come back to take on his responsibilities in Theyyam.

Excerpt from Field Notes:

We then met with the men who are a part of the Theyyam artist families. As they all speak Malayalam and I do not it took some time to communicate. Luckily one of the sons of one of the elders of the Theyyam family, spoke Hindi as he had worked in Delhi for ten years, and returned only recently to fulfill his responsibilities within the Theyyam. I was able to speak with him in Hindi about his experiences, though he was of course most interested in knowing about me, where I was from, my marital status, etc. It was interesting however to learn that many of the key family members and participants of the Theyyam festival in Keezhara including Theyyam families and musician families, often leave the town to pursue other careers. Many of them end up returning to participate and prepare for Theyyam.

(February 15, 2013)

It is important to note that not only was I the only non-Indian in Keezhara, but also the only person not from Kerala. Despite the growth in tourism in North Malabar, very few foreigners travel through Keezhara. I met a number of other villagers, many of them in their early forties like Dhanaraj, who also traveled home each year for Theyyam. Some came from Cochin, the capital of Kerala, but many came from further reaching parts of India, including Mumbai, Chennai,

Kolkata, and Delhi, and one person I met flew in from Qatar, where he lives and works. Though not all return annually, many see the festival as an opportunity to reunite with family, friends, and classmates from childhood. From the onset it felt that Theyyam in Keezhara is as much about community as it is a cultural festival.

3.2.2 Keezhara's Geography

The main road of Keezhara snakes from the Koolam Bhagavathy Temple, along the bus route diagonally to the northeast, with the river somewhat mimicking its movement to the north. I drew a sketch of the town, presented in Image 3.8.

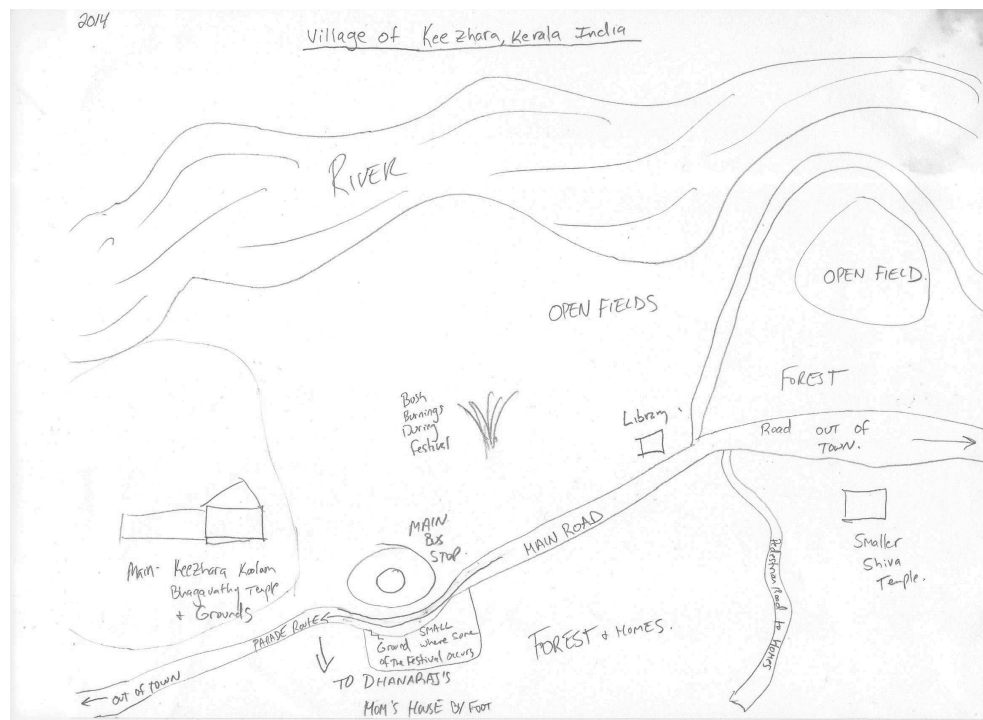


Image 3.8 Drawn map of the village of Keezhara

3.2.3 Structure of the Festival and Important Events

The bulk of my time in Keezhara was spent eating with Dhanaraj's family and guests, attending meals at the Temple, attending all Theyyam activities, sleeping, and then waking at odd hours in order to ensure that we caught all of the performances, which were scattered inconsistently throughout each day. To this day I am not certain how Dhanaraj knew what time each Theyyam was occurring and where, other than through word of mouth, or by passing the temple grounds and asking a performer when things would commence. The schedule we kept during the festival is documented in my field notes (Appendix A), but here is a rough summary of the flow of the Theyyam festival activities: 9:30 am we would wake up and have some coffee and food. Then we would nap, and around 12:00 or 12:30 pm we would head to the temple for the Thottam, the reading of the story of Theyyam for that day. Afterward we would come home and rest, which would entail eating, greeting visitors, friends, old classmates, neighbors, and family who would drop by throughout the day, taking trips into town to see old friends of Dhanaraj's or to see his old school, etc.

Dhanaraj and I would spend some of our down time discussing the recordings and photographs we had taken throughout the previous day; the children would play; Nisha, Dhanaraj's mother, and some of his aunts would cook; and we would listen to music. Dhanaraj would often edit photographs during the day and post them on social media sites, namely Facebook. I was always diligent about trying to charge my field equipment and spare batteries, as power outages were frequent and unpredictable. At 5:00 pm we would go back to the temple grounds to talk with the performers and document the preparation for the evening Vellatam, childhood version of Theyyam, the performances, the costuming, face painting, etc. Around 6:30 pm the Vellatam performance would

begin, and villagers would gather at the temple ground. Around 8:00 pm we would finally make our way back to Dhanaraj's mother's house to rest and have dinner. Then around midnight we would return to the back of the temple or across the street for the Theyyam preparation and performance, which would generally end around 2:30 am. Then we would go home and sleep.

Excerpts from Field Notes:

I went to sleep at 2:30am after the previous evening's festivities. I woke up at 9:30am after most of the house had already been awake for at least 2 hours. The small amount people sleep here amazes me. But I guess it's like being in a cabin in the woods on vacation and all of your relatives who you are happy to see, showing up at odd times to drop in and hang out. Meanwhile I have developed a cold, since the first day, and my nose has been running like mad, not to mention a slightly dry and itchy throat. The good news is that it's manageable, despite blowing my nose into anything near by, and today Nisha and Dhanaraj will go to the next town over to fetch some supplies including Vitamin C tablets for me.

Now back to Theyyam. Today the schedule will change a bit from previous days. Around 12-noon there will be the Thottam, which has happened every day since we arrived. The Thottam is basically a Ritual song, where the performers play a drumbeat in an interesting and varied way, and then at full speed recite an oral tradition of the Theyyam story. There are elders from the performance family who will stand by to ensure that the oral tradition story is properly recited, and they will jump-in and add lines if necessary. The elders will also step in for the characters, if they need a break, or to take rest. Sometimes the junior family member has not memorized all of the Thottam story, and so a senior member will take over for part of the story that the junior member, often their son or nephew, has not yet learned.

We attended the Thottam at 12:30pm. Took images of coconut smashing after Thottam and took recordings of chatting. Dhanaraj has pics of me with school kids and his best friends. We had poa (food) at the temple after thottam. Thottam is basically the story of what is going to happen that day. It is all oral and there is no written documentation that people here know about. The story is in Sanskrit and very few people can understand it unless they have really studied with the Theyyam families. Dhanaraj may know the stories from years of listening.

(February 17, 2013)

All Thottams are reading one story, which is the story of the fourth day's evening performance with Kesthrapalam and Thayaparadevatha. They are really telling the story of Thayaparadevatha who is the Mother Goddess, and the Keezhara temple is her temple. The Thottam is the story of who she is, where she is from, how she came to this place, etc. The Thottam also gives different names for the Mother Goddess. Theyyam is also performed exclusively by the backwards caste. The story says that Daiva, the god, was in human form-a backwards caste person [Pulaya] who was killed by a forward caste person. When Daiva became a god she/he took revenge on the forward caste. For this reason Theyyam is performed always by the Backwards caste [the Pulayas]."

Theyyam is fundamentally it seems about community. Theyyam in Keezhara is a ritual tradition that maintains Hindu devotional practices to the land, to fire, to water, and overall to the earth. The story of the Tiger Theyyam, as Nisha tells it, is that long back when people found Keezhara, they wanted to settle here, to build huts, and to farm, etc. Now the place is a town of 1500 families, surrounded by tall hills and by a river on one side. When the people came, they began to build and settle and they disrupted the animals and natural ecosystem of the area. The tigers became angry and there was a clash, whereby the people fought the tigers and it was awful. From that point forward legend has it that the people conducted ritual prayer and celebration by way of the Theyyam festival. Theyyam in Keezhara is the people asking the tigers for permission to co-exist on their land.

(February 19, 2013)

The festival began with a long parade down the same main road we had walked earlier in the day. There were villagers lining the road all the way from the main temple grounds to a small temple three quarters of a mile down the road. Before the parade began, Dhanaraj, Sidu, and I went to the small temple, which was much smaller and further into the town. There villagers, Theyyam artists, and schoolchildren were gathered, assembling elaborate offerings for the Gods. The smaller temple ground was comprised of the temple, a small man-made watering hole with steps leading down to the water that looked somewhat like an ancient Jewish mikvah, and greenery and trees. The men preparing the offerings walked up and down the steps toward the watering hole, for a reason I

could not make sense of. It was difficult to tell if they were washing themselves or the offerings or possibly both. The adult men were wearing *lungis*, also called *vestis*, the traditional men's clothing in Kerala. These can be white with a stripe of color, or often heavily patterned and colorful pieces of fabric that the men will wrap around their waist as clothing. The lungi is floor length after being wrapped around the waist, but it is common for men to grab the two bottommost ends of the lungi that almost touch the ground and pull them up toward their waste again, tying a knot with the ends of the fabric. This creates a shorter lungi that falls above the knee. This shorter version is common in Keezhara as it is cooler and easier to move in. The men who were preparing the offerings at the small temple were all wearing white lungis with a gold stripe. These are traditional attire worn for religious purposes, and seen often throughout the Theyyam festival, worn by the temple minders, the musicians, and several other members of the community like those preparing the offerings.

Nisha told me that in Keezhara, as well as her own village located twenty kilometers away, the people who care for the coconut trees that are used for offerings to the gods are governed by very strict dietary and behavioral practices, not just during Theyyam, but throughout the year. She said that it is a very serious matter and the men who are responsible for the offerings are considered to be very pure by the community.

Excerpt from Field Notes:

Not just anyone can climb or cultivate the coconut tree, and the coconuts are only used for devotion and as an offering to the gods. The person who cares for and pays tribute to the tree will eat only pure foods, and will then fast after which they will climb the coconut tree and bless the fruits. This will happen regularly for temple related functions, worship, festivals, etc. Someone from the coconut family will participate in Theyyam and his friends and family will come to Theyyam to support him. Similarly the

fishermen will come and be supported by their friends and family. (Tribe and clan)

(February 2013)

The offerings that the men at the small temple were putting together consisted of tender coconuts and a variety of fruits that were strung onto long bamboo rods, which were then carried by the children of the village down the road from the small temple toward the main temple grounds. These offerings were so abundant and plentiful that they were almost stacked on top of one another on the ground adjacent to the sanctum of the Bhagavad temple, in front of the two wooden chairs where the Theyyam would ultimately sit after dancing their way from the small temple. These chairs are said to be special and only for gods.

In addition, there were several places in the field along the road from the small temple to the Bhagavad temple where large bundles of dried weeds were tied with twine and erected, standing somewhere between 8 and 10 feet tall in the middle of the field. These bundles were later lit on fire, as the Theyyam danced their way to the main temple grounds, the image below portrays the burning bundles.



Image 3.9 A burning bundle off the side of them main road

Two Theyyam danced through the crowd and down the street after the children passed with offerings, their ankle jewelry clanking and shaking aggressively, making distinctive but erratic percussive sounds. Theyyam drummers walked down the street, flanking the Theyyam, drumming loudly to announce the Theyyam's presence to the crowd. The two Theyyam were dancing aggressively, almost jumping at times, and spinning around as they danced, moving from one side of the street to the other as they slowly made their way down the road. Their movement was erratic, almost as though they were intoxicated; this signifies the Theyyam's process of transformation into a God.

It is common as part of preparation and performance for the Theyyam to drink toddy, an alcoholic beverage made of fermented sap from a coconut palm. There is a special toddy-drinking vessel used in Theyyam; it is made of steel and is small like a little teapot. On one side there is a curved spout; this is the side that only gods may drink from. Then there is an opening at the top of the vessel where the toddy is poured in; this is the part where other people affiliated with the Theyyam performance drink from—often this part is done behind the scenes. At one Theyyam performance in a village in Kannur, I was given the toddy vessel as a foreign visitor, and told to drink only from the top, as the spout was for gods only. The Theyyam made their way to the main temple, and right outside on the temple grounds they sat on two wooden seats, special for Theyyam Gods, which they had now become. Piled high between the seats and the crowd were the offerings brought by the children.

Excerpt from Field Notes:

Around 6:30/7pm crowds began to gather on the road between the main temple and the smaller temple down the road. Young Children lined up and carried fruits through the procession, a drumming group led the way and

many people holding umbrellas were creating a passageway for the performers within the parade. The two main characters ran up and down the passageway dancing and performing all the way down the road.

Meanwhile large stacks and piles of hay were being burned to the ground all around the crowds. Some of these huge bundles of hay and straw, etc. were stood up erect in the middle of an empty field, and then lit, creating an illuminating glow that burned for a good half hour, and spread embers throughout the festivities.

The procession moved into the field adjacent the main temple, where the two main characters were completely surrounded by piles and piles of tender coconuts, bananas on their stalks, baby jackfruit, and other seasonal fruits. The two Theyyam sat in special wooden Theyyam seats as people fed them tender coconut water, etc.

The attention of the festivities then shifts to the Shivaji Malam, which takes place in the back of the open field adjacent the temple, where drummers and other instrumentalists perform awesome rhythm pieces along with coordinated dancing, there are probably 20-25 drummers, and they are surrounded by a circle of festival attendees.

The night concludes in this fashion and ultimately comes to an end with a thirty-minute long, and very loud, fireworks celebration, which was set off from the river nearby. The fireworks had an interestingly rhythmic continuous present about them. There was then a 2am Theyyam but I went to sleep and did not attend these, as I was too exhausted.

(February 15, 2013)

Around noon the following day we made our way to the main temple, which we did every subsequent day of the festival to witness the Thottam, or storytelling portion of the festival.

“The term thottam is derived from the word sothram [a Sanskrit word meaning a hymn addressed to Divinity, in the form of conversation, prayer, or description]. During the thottam, the history of theyyam is also narrated, literally “thottam” means “to create,” or “appear.” Theyyam artists pray in front of the kaav, or sanctum, and are dressed with a red cloth covering their head. Some believe that Thottam is basically a

realization through which Theyyam artists become converted into Gods”
(Santosh, 2013, p. 33).

During Thottam the Theyyam artists line up facing the sanctum of the Temple and recite the story of the Theyyam in Sanskrit, a language that few if any of the performers or villagers understand. Performers learn the Thottam stories through oral tradition, not text, which has been passed down through countless generations. The recitation is done so quickly that even if there was a teacher of Sanskrit listening, it is unlikely that the person would be able to catch most of the words.

As Dhanaraj, Nisha, Sidu, and I approached the temple we had to first remove our sandals and leave them outside the four-foot-high concrete wall which separated that which is considered outside of the temple area from that which is considered the outdoor area of the temple. (Image 3.10). Removing sandals is general practice before entering any Hindu temple. The outdoor area was small, the same place where I paid the gentleman 500 rupees the previous day. It had a floor of sand-colored dirt and a thatched permanent covering to keep the area cool from the midday sun and dry from rain. There was a bench against the wall of the sanctum, and directly in the middle of the wall was an open window cutout in the concrete, which was never to be blocked, as the goddess is said to be inside, and it is the place where people stand and pray to the goddess. In the middle of this outdoor space, suspended from the ceiling, directly across from the cutout window of the sanctum, was a brass oil lamp referred to as a diya or Puja lamp. The diya hung 3 feet above the ground on a long chain, and was filled with coconut oil and a long cotton thread that was twisted and immersed in the oil then lit. This was also accompanied by another

diya that sat on the floor and stood two to three feet high, again directly facing the window to the sanctum. Images 3.10 and 3.11 provide a visual understanding of the layout of the main temple grounds, along with a depiction of the before mentioned diya and Theyyam performers during the Thottam.



Image 3.10 The Temple and associated grounds Image 3.11 Thottam performance

The Thottam performance looked visually similar each day, with performers and musicians standing outside of the temple grounds facing inward toward the sanctum (Image 3.11). The main performer wears a red costume that consists of a lungi-like bottom piece and a red head covering that is affixed to the performer's head with flowing fabric that drapes down his back, and he is holding a drum. The drum, or chenda, as it is called in Malyalam, was medium in size and slung over his right shoulder; it is cylindrical and has two drumming surfaces—one which he plays with a wooden mallet with his right hand, and the other which he beats with his left hand. He is the main performer of this Thottam and the people surrounding him play roles in supporting his transformation and recitation.

To his left there is another Theyyam performer who wears a white lungi with a red piece of fabric down the front and no shirt and has white body paint on this chest and arms. He also holds a smaller drum of the same design in the same orientation but plays it only with his hands. Behind the two of them are

the eldest performers of Theyyam in the village who stand by prepared to step in and recite the Thottam if the main performer in the red head dress forgets a piece of the story.

To the performers' right are the three religious minders, who tend to the Theyyam gods, as well as the temporary spiritual spaces and materials throughout the festival. They are all adorned in white lungi with gold trim and have minimal white body paint in a similar design to that of the main performer. To the performers' left is another drummer with an even larger drum. In addition to the people I have described, there are several Theyyam musicians who stand roughly twenty feet behind the performers, as the Thottam nears its conclusion. The configuration of musicians changes slightly day to day, but on this first day there were five musicians playing large cylindrical drums like those played by the performer, but with one drum head facing upward and one hanging toward the ground. These are played with two sticks, known as koal, that are similar in length to traditional western drum kit sticks, but wider and with a slight curve toward the top. Rather than hitting the drum head-on with the point of the stick, the drummers hit the length of the curved portion of the stick against the drumhead. Two musicians were playing a double reed flute-like instrument called a cheenikkuzhal. The word kuzhal means pipe flute in Malayalam, and the cheenikkuzhal is the specific flute that is made for and used during Theyyam. The instrument has a wooden body with holes at the end of which there is a bronze horn. The performers play the instrument by blowing directly into the double reed and closing small holes with both hands, with the horn facing away from them and toward the ground. On some days a finger

cymbal player joined the ensemble. These musicians help to signal the conclusion of the Thottam recitation daily (see Image 3.12).



Image 3.12 Musicians and elders from the performance artist families during Thottam

The Theyyam performer speaks the story in a fast-paced rhythmic cadence while maintaining a trance-like demeanor and tone. He accompanies the recitation by hitting his drum in a way that emphasizes and guides the rhythm. Each day's Thottam lasts roughly 30 minutes.

The sonic environment surrounding the Thottam was composed of the sounds of everyday life going on as usual. This is common for Hindu celebrations in Indian temples, as they are often on the main road and open air, allowing sounds from the outside in. The main bus stop in Keezhara is directly next to the temple, 25 feet from where the Thottam takes place, and like most Indian busses, these are loud, they honk, and then screech when they make a stop. There is then the hustle and bustle of people getting on and off the bus, as well as motorcycle and automobile honking, which in India generally is a way to alert someone to your presence as a driver, and as such happens with great frequency. Additionally there were the sounds of vendors setting up stalls on the grounds

behind the temple in preparation for the rest of the day's activities, as well as many people who are walking, gathering, and talking around the temple. The large Buddha trees surrounding the temple swayed as the wind blows and all of these sounds create the soundscape of Thottam. (Refer to sound clip Thottam.wav)

In front of the main performer there was a microphone to speak into. The microphone at Thottam is an interesting modern-day addition to the performance that is noticeably absent from Vellatam and Theyyam performances throughout the festival. The microphone is attached to two speakers facing outward—not toward the temple but rather toward the village, so that the villagers can hear the Thottam recited. The Thottam performances were not well attended; in addition to Dhanaraj, Nisha, and myself there were usually only a handful of village onlookers, most sitting on a bench with their backs to the sanctum, facing the performers. I was surprised that onlookers of the Thottam, though often captivated, were casual in their movements and personal chatter in a way that I did not experience during the Theyyam and Vellatam performances. Images 3.13 and 3.14 capture musicians and performance artists in the midst of performance.



Image 3.13: Thottam ritual (left) Image 3.14 Cheenikkuzhal player and drummers during an evening Theyyam performance

The younger generations of Theyyam performance families learn the dances and oral traditions piece by piece, and in the case of the Thottam, they may not have fully learned an individual Thottam before they are asked to perform the recitation in front of the temple. When the Thottam reader forgets a line, the elder behind him begins reciting from where the story was stopped, but does not step up to the microphone (Image 3.13). The elders stand behind or next to the reader, and beside them are several drummers who help to keep the beat of Thottam, which is rattled off in a fashion I can best liken to fast spoken poetry that I have heard.

Though the Thottam performance is underattended, the villagers who do gather for Thottam listen and watch with great focus, almost a meditative response to the somewhat trance-like speedy rhythmic recitation. I noticed my response to the Thottam as one of a rhythmic focus, where I became lost in the drumming and the beat, though I found my attention wander, as the Thottam is lengthy and there is no physical movement beyond the beating of the drums. This is in stark contrast to the Vellatam and Theyyam performances, where there is a lot of movement and often fire, sometimes in motion and sometimes still. Because of the stillness of Thottam, this was also the time in each day where I felt my presence as an outsider most apparent. Though there were few onlookers, the Thottam does happen at the Hindu Temple, and those who come are from the village; all know one another and all know the performers. For those 30 minutes each morning I clearly stuck out, despite my well-suited and brightly colored salwar kameez outfit, which matched the clothing of some of the women in the community. It was clear that I was from elsewhere, and the lack of noise, crowds, movement, and fire made that most apparent.

3.2.5 Relevant Images and Sounds

First I will explore the organological sounds from the festival; this focuses on ways the community uses things that make sound, and how the performers of the festival utilize objects with a particular known function for a completely different purpose. The people of Keezhara are using things around them, such as plants and fruit, to create things that make sound for their festival, which I then documented through field recordings.

As I previously mentioned, fish are a key part of the Theyyam festival in Keezhara, and the fishermen in the town play a key role in this annual festival by spending one day from sun up to near sundown fishing for a particular type of small silver fish in the river, that they can then present to the god. The sounds that accompany the fish festivities begin as the fishermen walk from the river down the main road toward the temple. There were people lined up awaiting the fishermen all down the road, and their entrance was celebrated with scampering and excitement among the village youngsters, as well as loud fast drumming that guided the fishermen, as they carried their neatly organized strands of silver fish hanging like wind chimes from bamboo poles, toward the temple grounds. The drummers, flute player, and hand cymbalist wailed a very fast rhythm that hovered around 158 beats per minute, hitting out eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes for a few minutes as the fishermen walked to the temple and displayed the strings of silver fish on bamboo as an offering for the gods.

Excerpt from Field Notes:

Today there is another Theyyam about fish. Apparently Theyyam is the one time, when people from all different castes will come together at the main

temple. Theyyam brings all of these people together, in a way nothing else in their daily lives will. The fishermen come from a particular caste and they will participate in a Theyyam today. All day these fishermen have been at the river, trying to fish for this one type of silver fish that swims near the surface. No one else will fish in the river today. From early in the morning the fishermen will be fishing and praying in the river, in order to catch enough fish to give to the gods at the evening Theyyam.

(February 17, 2013)

Fire, fireworks, and burning bundles of palm fronds play a large role in the festival (Image 3.16). The opening ceremony of the festival involves a ritualistic burning of several 10- to 12-foot-high bundles of what looked like dried palm fronds at different points along the path between the two temples in Keezhara. The sound and smell of the burning fronds paves the way for the dance of the two Theyyam from the small temple to the larger temple. At the end of the evening, after the Theyyam have concluded their performances, there is a twenty-minute fireworks celebration over the river nearby. The fireworks have an interesting rhythm to them, which seem to mimic some of the Theyyam style drumming from earlier in the evening, and it certainly evokes a continuous present. The fireworks at their peak, which run for a minute and a half almost nonstop, have a rhythm of about 120 beats per minute. The syncopation of the firework blasts, one after another after another rapidly exploding in the sky, mimic that of the drummer's sticks hitting the drums, and the performers' percussive ankle jewelry when their feet hit the hard packed dirt of the temple grounds, rapidly moving up and down as they move with sudden erratic motion signaling their embodiment by a god. This ankle jewelry, called chilambu, is a hard hollow silver anklet filled with small pieces of solid metal material that create percussive sounds when the performer moves; it is worn around the ankle

and there is a protruding silver nub that is placed above the toes, a piece of twine is threaded into an eye hole on the silver nub and then around the large toe of the performer's foot. Performers traditionally wear one chilambu on each ankle.

On a different day of the festival, village men run to the top of two of the towns four hills with burning bunches of fronds, racing to be the first to return back to the temple. We see fire used throughout the festival in many ways, both as a stand-alone action, as well as fire that is manipulated by humans, as is the case with the hill running ritual described above. Many of the Theyyam rituals and performances are accompanied by the sounds of crackling fire, burning palm fronds, and fire that is being wielded to draw focus to or away from something.



Image 3.16 Fireworks illuminated the sky to signify the first night of the festival.

Hard brown coconuts are used with great frequency in the festival. In addition to being left at the temple as an offering for the goddess, each day after the reading of the Thottam (the story of Thayaparadevatha, the Mother Goddess), the temple minders smash a hard coconut against a stone in the temple, allowing the juice to explode everywhere (Image 3.17). The shells are then collected. This sound of the smashing coconut concludes the Thottam reading on each day of the festival. These hard coconuts are used frequently by the Theyyam characters as well, during their performances, and are often smashed against their special wooden stools in the midst of a performance. The

sound created by this smash is masked by the loud drumming that creates the suspense of the pre-smash to smash portion of the Theyyam's performance. The visual of the coconut is, however, mesmerizing. During the daylight hours, in the example of the coconut smashed at the conclusion of Thottam, the coconut splits into many pieces and the coconut milk flies everywhere. During the evening Theyyam performances, the coconut, milk, and pieces of the hard shell of the coconut fly, but the Theyyam is unflinching when throwing the coconut, and only the village onlookers register the impact of the smashing coconut.¹¹

Another use of the coconut shell that is important but does not contribute to the festival sonically, is as a vessel for the mixing and holding of natural face and body paints that are used to paint the Theyyam characters (Image 3.18). Theyyam face paint is a fascinating area of study unto itself; there is one paper I am aware of strictly focused on the topic of face and body paint, entitled, "Face Make Up of Theyyam," written by Santosh K.V. an artist from Keezhara (Santosh, 2013). I met Santosh in Keezhara in February 2013 through Dhanaraj. Santosh's artistic work is excellent in its own right and has been exhibited around India. In his master's thesis, Santosh speaks of the stark differences between the face painting techniques of each individual Theyyam in different communities. He tells his readers of the basic rules of face painting in Theyyam:

For face painting [the] face should be clean and hygienic. There should not be any kind of oil over the face. Though according to the artist they may make imaginary artistic skills in the work nothing is allowed to add to the existing one. (Santosh, 2013, p. 95).

¹¹ Tender green coconuts are not as commonly found in Keezhara. In fact the villagers spend weeks gathering these tender coconuts that serve a variety of critical roles in the festival. The Theyyam characters drink the tender coconut water and accept them as offerings and children participate in carrying these coconuts around the village as part of the festival.

He goes on to explain several of the designs within the face painting:

Eight angles, circle, half circle, crescent, triangle, squares and straight lines are vividly focused on the face of the Theyyam. So the artist should have such a good concentration and care while he does the same while he paints. If there is any mistake then complete drawing should be changed. (Santosh, 2013, p. 95).

Srihari Nair also speaks about the intricacies of the Theyyam face painting, in the following excerpt from *The Theyyam Charisma*:

The Facial Painting is a unique pattern for each Theyyam and this speaks volumes about the efforts made to give a meticulous touch and distinctive appearance to each Theyyam. The main difference of each Theyyam occurs on the base of square and circle lines, Crescent shape, and reddish moustache. These are a kind of wheats on the forehead for the famous Theyyams, like 'Vishnumoorthi', Bali and Moonnyeeswaran. There is a crescent shape over the forehead which is portrayed on the 'Manayola', is the special feature of 'Poomaran", Pulikandan 'Madayil Chamundi' Vetakorumakan.' (Nair, 2000, p. 1).

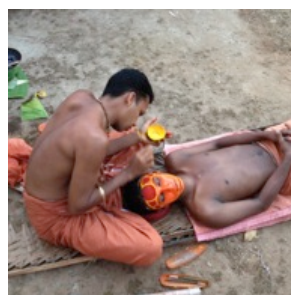


Image 3.17 Temple Minders smashing a coconut after daily Thottam (left) Image 3.18 Theyyam artist paints the face of another artist in preparation for performance (center) Image 3.19 A large pile of coconuts sits in front of two Theyyam as an offering

There are several traditional sonic tools at the epicenter of the Theyyam festival. These include three different sizes of a similarly built drum, small hand symbols, one kind of flute played only at Theyyam, and a wide variety of costume materials that serve as rhythmic tools when the Theyyam dance. This includes a commonly used set of silver ankle jewelry that goes around the performer's ankle and attach to the big toe, as well as several other pieces worn higher up on the ankle that includes silver and cowry shell (See Images 3.20 and 3.21)



Image 3.20 Basket in dressing room with Theyyam costume items (left), Image 3.21 Theyyam performer getting into costume and putting on ankle and foot jewelry (right)

3.3 Section Three: The Exhibition

3.3.1 Everyday Life: A Repertoire of Ritual and Performance

In December 2014 we mounted the exhibition, entitled *Everyday Life: A Repertoire of Ritual and Performance*, in Kannur, Kerala, at the Indian Medical Association Hall, commonly referred to as IMA Hall. Many of the community members from Keezhara made their way to the exhibition throughout the week, including several of the Theyyam artists.

The focus of my contribution to the exhibition was to create a soundscape that deepened the work that Dhanaraj had created. His focus on the

marginalization of the lower caste members of his community, the role Theyyam holds within Keezhara, and the role Theyyam families play in this festival, were the motivations behind much of his work. Theyyam is a bright, colorful festival that is often highlighted on the front of travel guides to Southern India, and Dhanaraj's focus was to bring attention to the real people behind the masques, who live their lives in service to this religious festival. My focus and intention was to create a soundscape that helped to draw attention to the themes of Dhanaraj's work by communicating our ideas and concerns about caste marginalization through sound.

Our hope was that the exhibition would challenge audiences to look beyond their own assumptions of the festival and even of the exhibition and artwork itself, to see the deeper connection of self with other. This theme permeates Dhanaraj's paintings, drawings, and photographs, and through our collaboration we developed an approach to communicate these same ideas aurally in my soundscape.

The following was the description of the exhibition that we provided to media outfits and placed on the wall of the exhibition hall.

This Exhibit is a visual and sonic exploration of the people who perform Theyyam. The artists are interested in exploring the margins, the gaps, the spaces, and the places where the people exist. They want to consider the relationship between humans and Gods as it is laid out for us in the Theyyam festival. There is no conversation of the intermediary, the place and space between the human, the Theyyam performer and the 'character' they are embodying, or the Gods: This exhibition will explore that space. Gods are unreachable or not touchable by human beings in the sense that

they are godly, and unavailable to the common person. This exhibit brings focus to the things that are touchable and that are touching, these are the human moments.

There is an intended play on words here by focusing on the touchable, those things touched by humans, while recognizing that the theme driving this art work is an exploration of marginalization, specifically aimed to bring attention to the untouchables of the community.

The aim was for the audience was to feel something in their chest, to take notice of particular sounds of Theyyam through my accentuating or augmenting aspects of the recorded sound. These sounds of touching, or interactivity between humans and the world around us may become searing or shocking to the listener. These sounds of humans touching things bring a hyper focus to the tactile and human elements of the Theyyam festival, while intentionally sidestepping the intrigue of the performative characterizations and costumes.

These same themes are explored in Dhanaraj's paintings and drawings, where he focuses on the performers themselves, and the things they are doing when they are not embodied by gods. In one such example, he paints a Theyyam performer who is in lay clothes and is dressing the other performer in his costume; in another, a multimedia photograph and line drawing piece, he depicts a Theyyam character in bright Technicolor adorned in an elaborate costume, and then a line drawing of a performer, painting on the Theyyam's makeup. This latter piece is quite striking as Dhanaraj contrasts bright colors with a black-and-white line drawing in order to bring attention to the person who is actually putting on the Theyyam's makeup (see Images 3.22 and 3.23).



Image 3.22 Painting by Dhanaraj Keezhara Image 3.23 Mixed Media piece by Dhanaraj Keezhara

3.3.2 Collecting Materials and Field Recordings

We spent time with the performers, talking to them, photographing, and recording their preparation time in the structure. Dhanaraj would give me very subtle cues from the beginning regarding how I navigated my relationship to the space inside the structure. He initially guided me through where to stand, and what angles to shoot or record from, that would ensure I was not in the way. This communication was difficult, as the rules seemed to shift as time went on, possibly because the performers became wearier throughout the week, requiring greater focus.

Dhanaraj and I spent time with the performers while they prepared for a performance. There were two-walled temporary structures set up across from the main temple grounds, where the performers kept their costumes, applied their makeup, ate food, and even slept. This structure had no floor and no ceiling; it was made from several wooden beams that were dug into the ground, smaller branches that were attached horizontally to these beams from the ground up to the top, which was roughly seven and a half feet tall. Palm fronds were then used to cover the structure, so that the two walls did create a visual

barrier. The walls of the two-sided structure were adorned with many performance items from costumes to clothing, to fresh palm fronds for ceremonies all thrown over the walls or tucked into the wall between the wooden branches. The floor was uncovered dirt where the performers would sit and lie for makeup, putting on percussive and traditional jewelry, and for eating. They had several palm frond matts that they would use to sit on in the structure.

The function and use of this area can be likened to a cross between a dressing room in a performance venue, where performers sit in front of mirrors with bright lights preparing their makeup before they go on stage or film, and a much more public space like a baseball field dug out, where professional baseball players sit before they go up to play. The performers could always be seen, as the structure has only two sides, but there was a clear sense that it was a protected space. The boundary of the two-wall structure seemed known to all in the community, as no one would get too close or go inside. One Theyyam performance included a fast costume change in the greenroom like structure while hundreds of onlookers were watching; yet no one stepped inside the boundary of the structure.

Concrete steps act as stadium seating around a portion of the outdoor area of the temple. There are three tall deep steps where performers and village people alike would sit, these steps curved around the outdoor area in a u-shape, passing by the two-walled structure. I would often set up my equipment on those steps and had many conversations with performers and villagers there.

Throughout the festival I recorded sounds of the preparations, performances, music, environment, and festival overall. My goal was to record sounds that would allow me to develop a soundscape exploring the challenges of

caste marginalization, such as sounds of the performers touching and interacting with elements of their costumes and performances before their transition to embodying a god.

I decided to focus as much as possible on capturing sounds from the festival in isolation and out of context. One example of this is the approach I took to capturing sounds for the air movement of our exhibition, "Everyday Life." I was very interested in the sounds that the performers made by way of their costumes and jewelry, and tried to capture those sounds isolated from the performance sounds by recording them while the performers were putting on their costumes or preparing before the performances, which included drumming, flutes, a lot of movement, and audience ambiance.

I traveled to India with all of the technological tools I used in my fieldwork and exhibition, including high-quality audio recording equipment, two specialized microphones, and a backup recorder. For audio recording equipment I carried a Sound Devices 788T 8-channel Audio recorder with 3 extra rechargeable batteries, and a Zoom H4N that accommodates stereo XLR inputs as a backup recording setup. I carried a Core Sound Tetramic, a four capsule ambisonic microphone, with battery packs and cabling, and an Audio Technica AT8022, which is an X/Y stereo field microphone. I carried windscreens and extra cabling in support of the primary and backup setups, as well as a boom pole, and a Pearson handheld grip, which I could use interchangeably with the microphones. I carried two pairs of field headphones with headphone extenders, as well as a messenger bag that all the equipment, except the boom, could be carried in when in the field. All of my equipment was battery-powered field equipment that required daily battery charging, and all

data was recorded to a combination of Compact Flash (CF) and Standard Definition (SD) memory cards, as well as internal hard drives.

I also traveled with a high-quality still image camera, and an iPhone 4S as backup for image and video capture. The camera was a Leica M9 with a 50mm 2.2 lens, along with a battery charger and a variety of backup SD cards. I carried a cable to download images off of the SD cards, along with a case for the camera and a tripod that could easily fit in my suitcase, and that converted into a monopod if needed. The iPhone 4S is always my backup camera, with good battery life, and ease of portability, it can also easily be charged off of my computer.

3.3.3 The Creative Process: Designing the Soundscape

The Panchabhuta, a Hindu system of five elements that is found in the Vedas, was the inspiration behind the compositional soundscape. The Panchabhuta, is comprised of Prithvi (Earth), Jal (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air), and Akasha (Ether). I learned from Dhanaraj and the Theyyam performers in Keezhara that these elements are understood to play a large role in the Theyyam stories, as well as the rituals of the village. I chose to break the composition into four distinct movements with a recurring interstitial movement between each of the four. The four movements are mapped to the elements of water, air, fire, and earth, while the interstitial is mapped to the element of ether. The composition is designed to run for roughly one hour and ten minutes and then loop. Each of the movements employs a variety of field recordings and compositional practices and techniques. In the example of the movement representing air, the listener is

initially guided into the movement; they hear a very subtle and sporadic “jingling, » or what would be familiar to Theyyam goes as the sound of body jewelry, specifically the anklets worn by the performers. This sound occurs in isolation in the soundscape, which is rarely the case in Theyyam, as most performances have a strong musical drumming element. However, these recordings of the ankle bracelet were taken during the performers’ dressing period and are therefore divorced from the familiar sounds of drumming that one becomes accustomed to hearing whenever these anklets jingle during a dance. The movement progresses with the jingling sound becoming more constant but with variable pitch and rhythm. I was able to accomplish this by taking a variety of samples from the recordings and placing them in time relative to one another to establish varying rhythm. The movement progresses with the development of the sound of the performer’s foot hitting the dirt, and with a focus on that gesture and associated sound.

The soundscape itself is designed specifically to work in a four-channel sound-square configuration. A majority of the field recordings were taken with a Core tetramic, which is an ambisonic microphone. Recording with an ambisonic microphone and composing with software that supports sound spacialization—in this case in a four-channel environment and dynamic parameter adjustments—allowed me to develop a soundscape that responded specifically to Dhanaraj’s visual artwork and its orientation in the space, as well as the overall exhibition hall.

This approach aims to surround the audience in a sound field, and creates sonic clusters within the exhibition space. The soundscape was designed so that audience members would perceive elements of the exhibition moving around the

space through the sound square. In certain moments, it would seem that the sounds were coming from only one quadrant or corner of the exhibition, while in other moments, the soundscape seemed to guide audience members through the space. This work engages automation and sonic effects, along with audio editing techniques and manipulation. The piece itself was composed in Pro Tools 11, and the spacialization of the ambisonic recordings was created in Reaper, using the core tetramic visual virtual mic vst. These digital audio workstation tools allowed me to use a hybrid of ambisonic and stereo recordings, and to then compose using those recordings.

My process for developing the composition entailed sitting in my studio with the sound square configuration setup, and the walls plastered with printouts of Dhanaraj's paintings, drawings, and photography that would be included in the exhibition. Though at the time we did not yet know the exact order and placement of his work, I was able to use the visual stimulus as a starting point for developing the composition and spacialization. All of the soundscape development was created in real time in the sound square environment.

During the exhibition the laptop and soundcard were behind the exhibition walls and all that was visible within the exhibit were the speakers and some cables. That being said, throughout the exhibition I brought people back behind the scenes to show them the audio configuration and the way that the sound works. In particular, there were a number of college-aged students who were very interested in the behind-the-scenes elements of the soundscape.



Image 3.24 The Exhibition at IMA Hall in Kannur



Image 3.25 Visitors to the exhibition

3.3.4 Listening to the Composition

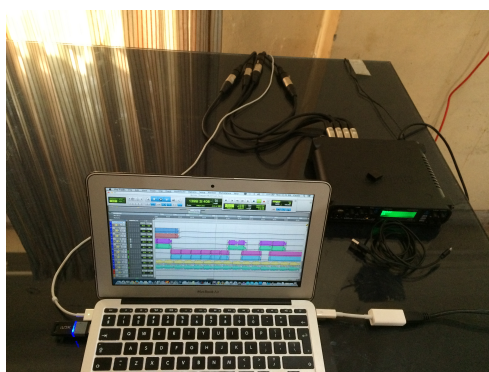


Image 3.26 Computer and sound card running Pro Tools for exhibition (left) Image 3.27 Visitor listening closely to speaker



I will begin the description of this compositional work with an exploration of the way it has been influenced by Pierre Schaeffer's concrete style of composition (Shaeffer et al., 2012). Both the approach to recording sounds in the field and the approach to composing with those sounds are technologically mediated. I rely on digital recording equipment, analogue microphones, and digital format conversion software to record and hear back what I have recorded. I then employ software technology tools to inform and sculpt the

composition itself, not to mention the sound card and speakers that I rely on to configure the sound-square environment in which I mix, compose, and ultimately exhibit. At its core, concrete music presents itself as a “new way of making” and is concerned with a “new type of object” (Schaeffer et al, 2012). The very approach to developing composition from recorded music is inherently abstract.

For this exhibition, my creative and compositional process aims to take the listener on a journey through Pierre Schaeffer’s *Four Modes of Listening*, or *Quatre Écoutes*. These modes create a framework for understanding sounds’ characteristics as concrete/abstract, or subjective/objective, and then breaks sound into four modes; indicative listening (*écouter*), selective listening (*dentendre*), identity listening (*comprendre*), and to be able to listen (*ouïr*). In particular the composition attempts to move the listener from subjective concrete listening (*ouïr*) to objective concrete listening (*écouter*), and then to abstract listening. For the sake of this dissertation, I am specifically applying Schaeffer’s modes of listening to visual performance; in this case I am divorcing sounds of the festival from the festival performances by recording the sounds used in the festival out of context intentionally to highlight the sounds as they are tied to the performers as humans, rather than in the context of the performances when those performers are embodied by gods. Divorcing sonic material from visual performance is one approach that Dhanaraj and I believed could help audience members connect with the humanness and touch-ability of the people who are the Theyyam artists.

In my composition, I was interested in highlighting sonic moments that would engage listeners in causal listening. For example, I might take a sound like

drumming, which a villager would be familiar with hearing as a part of many Theyyam rituals, but rather than incorporating the recorded sound of a drum from a performance, I would include a piece from a warm-up or pre-performance moment where the drummer was striking the drum but not to a familiar rhythm. Though I can't be certain that I can interrupt the pre-existing brain patterns a villager from Keezhara might have in association with drumming and Theyyam, as drumming is a huge part of the festival, I have still attempted to focus the listeners' attention on a single drum beat with the hopes that they will experience a shift from subjective concrete listening to objective concrete listening that may encourage listeners to consider how or why that single hit of the drum occurred and, more to the point, to pique their curiosity with regard to who is hitting the drum.

I attempted to intentionally divorce the sounds of the Theyyam festival from the performances, rituals, dances, and storytelling that the people of Keezhara are intimately familiar with and would quickly recognize even in a sonic-only environment. The intention was to try to refocus the audience's attention on the sounds they were hearing, for when we are familiar with the sounds that we hear, we often do not listen as closely, as our brains fill in the gaps of information, and our brain ends up guiding and in some cases deciding what we hear.

The hope or intended impact of the sonic approach of this exhibition was to sonically guide listeners away from hearing the sounds of Theyyam in the ways they are most familiar with, and instead to hear sounds that are familiar, as though they are new. At the same time, the audience was surrounded by Dhanaraj's visual representations of the humanness and the people behind the

costumes and face paint in Theyyam. The aim was for this combination to reorient the audience to a new starting place from where they could consider and challenge their ingrained assumptions of who the human performers are, not the embodied gods but the people who were their neighbors.

Through visitor feedback at the exhibition, I found that my intention of invoking their objective concrete listening of the soundscape was in fact effective, and also, it was what they disliked the most in the soundscape. Listeners expressed a desire for a soundscape that allowed them to more easily and clearly identify the sounds that they were hearing, and to associate the sounds with performances of the festival, as this was more familiar to them and representative of their experiences with Theyyam. In particular I was asked by several people to include more of the traditional drumming sounds, as those were the nicest.

One Theyyam performer from Keezhara approached me at the exhibition and expressed his frustration at the way I chose to present the recordings of the festival. He pointed at one of Dhanaraj's paintings, where a musician was striking a drum, and told me that I should have a button next to the painting that a visitor to the exhibition could push to hear the sound the drum makes. He was unhappy with the curated, sculpted, and at times cacophonous, yet familiar, soundscape that he heard in the exhibition hall, and felt strongly that the best use of the recordings would be a one-to-one correlation, on an explanatory level, so that a visitor could hear a sound and see the image of the source of that sound at the same time. He expressed quite strongly that the way I had created the sound within the exhibit did not help to illustrate which objects makes which sounds.

To me this inquiry from the Theyyam performer was surprising, because he obviously knew the sound that the drum made, as he performs in the festival year after year. But his point was interesting and made me think about what a visitor from Keezhara expects when they enter the Theyyam festival or a space like the exhibition, or the Folklore academy that highlights aspects of Theyyam. Then it made me think about what I expect when I enter an exhibition. What I came to was that the performer was not viewing the exhibition as artwork, even though Dhanaraj is a very well-known and regarded artist from Keezhara; rather, he was viewing it as an extension of Theyyam, as something that should accurately and only accurately represent the festival.

3.3.5 The Exhibition Opening Ceremony

The Kerala Folklore Akademi sponsored the exhibition and supported our work, not only financially, by paying for the rental costs of the hall, but also by using their networks to attract support from the community. Mr. B. Muhammed Ahammed, the chairman of the Kerala Folklore Akademi, sat beside me and Dhanaraj at the press conference in Kannur, where our discussion about the exhibition was televised, and where journalists from Malayalam and English newspapers alike asked us questions about the exhibition for articles they were going to write promoting the exhibition. Mr. Ahammed, along with the Akademi's secretary, Mr. M. Pradeep Kumar, were both present at the opening ceremony for the exhibition which was heavily televised, and which involved a ceremony by Theyyam artists from Keezhara. The "gallery opening" was in this instance more of a context setting, media intensive, two-hour introduction to the

exhibition for the VIP guests and media who were present, the Folklore Akademi representatives, Dhanaraj and myself, as well as friends, family, and onlookers.

Two Theyyam artists from Keezhara built a square structure from coconut palms that symbolized the beginning of Theyyam; they traditionally build this same structure during the start of the Theyyam festival, shown in Image 3.28. The square structure was roughly two feet high and made from weaving together cut pieces of the coconut palms, which resulted in a square that had many smaller squares within it.



Image 3.28 The coconut palm structure built by Theyyam performers for the opening ceremony of the exhibition

They then built and attached to the corner, or intersecting points, of each small square, long stiff pieces of palm frond, wrapped in cloth and soaked in coconut oil. This structure sat in the center of the exhibition hall for one day, until the opening ceremony.

Mr. Ahammed started the ceremony by welcoming all the guests and introducing the exhibition, the mission of the Folklore Akademi, and the artists. Mr. Pradeep Kumar then gave a longer introduction, which included a short speech from both Dhanaraj and myself about the motivation for the exhibition. I spoke in English and Dhanaraj in Malyalam, while various news channels covered the opening. Mr. Kumar then called guests and VIPs one at a time to

light one of the 20 cloth-wrapped fronds on fire, until all were lit and the exhibition hall was filled with smoke (Image 3.29).



Image 3.29 The Theyyam ceremony at the exhibition opening at IMA Hall in Kannur

During the course of the exhibition, Mr. M. Pradeep Kumar asked me if I would be willing to provide the Akademi with some of the recordings I had taken at the Keezhara Theyyam, in support of the development of a soundscape for their Akademi facility and museum. This was a wonderful honor and I told him I would be happy to give those recordings to him for the Akademi's use. I have since then been working with the Akademi on sharing the recordings with them and am hosting on my personal website a library of the composed soundscape for use by the Kerala Folklore Akademi as well as any other interested parties.

3.3.6 Responses to the Exhibit

We were fortunate to have a wide variety of conversations with visitors to the exhibition as well as with members of the community. This was supported in large part by the culture of gallery exhibitions in South India where artists are present throughout the entirety of an exhibition, which is often a week or less in

length. Though exhausting after several long days, being present meant that we were able to speak to all visitors of the space, and hear their thoughts and feedback. During this time, I collected interviews, had informal discussions, and wrote down anecdotal vignettes of people's comments, experiences, and contributions to the space.

The following highlights several vignettes of visitor feedback to the exhibit. One older gentleman and his wife approached me after walking around the exhibit to share with me a DVD they had brought of their seven-year-old grandson, who had performed his first Theyyam that season. They expressed immense joy and pride in their description of his performance and their excitement for me to see their grandson's performance and possibly incorporate it into a future exhibition. Two college-age boys walked into the gallery one day, an atypical demographic of visitor to the gallery, with an interest in the sound design, the multiple speaker configurations and the technology behind the exhibit. They struck up a conversation with me, saying they were studying sound design and were very interested in the technologies I was using, and the approach to the exhibition. We spent an hour behind the walls of the exhibit with the computer and sound card discussing Pro Tools, sound spatialization, ambisonic recordings, and the transformation of different parameters of the audio that influenced the soundscape design.

Several Theyyam artists from Keezhara, whom I had met during the festival, approached me during the exhibit to express frustration about the sounds. There was also the gentleman I previously mentioned, who walked me over to a speaker in the far corner of the room, and as sounds came out of it he pointed to a painting just next to the speaker and said, "They are not the same." My initial

reaction to his suggestion to have a button next to the photographs that, when pushed, played sounds that directly corresponded to the image, was slightly defensive, as I felt he didn't understand the intention behind my work, but quickly I moved from my mindset as the artist back to that of ethnographer and realized that his suggestions helped to illuminate how the community of Keezhara understood the soundscape, as well as his personal expectations of what a representation of Theyyam should be, and what it should accomplish.

In juxtaposition to the soundscape I created for the *Everyday Life* exhibit, a future work could incorporate a section or room that attempts to do exactly what this gentleman suggests, which is provide a one to one correlation between sound and image, allowing people to decide and control when they hear what. It would be interesting to build a sound box that allowed visitors to push buttons and playback sounds at will, and which captured the data of how many times each button was pushed and in what order. Such an addition to the exhibit could provide important insight into how people choose to engage with the sounds of the festival, which they are most drawn to, which they choose to listen to in repetition, and which are less popular. The outcome of this addition would come from providing the visitors with contrasting experiences, which could lead to deeper engagement with both the soundscape and the push button box, as they serve to represent different access points for the visitors. On the one hand visitors would experience the immediate gratification that comes from connecting visual and sonic material through the push of a button, and on the other hand they would have the experience of being immersed in a soundscape in which they had no control over the content, which would reintroduce the element of surprise and possibly re-engage the visitor in trying to connect the

sonic elements of the soundscape with the visual images in the exhibit. Ultimately, the goal would be to engage the visitors more deeply in the soundscape so that they might draw their own conclusions from what they hear, and it is possible that providing an opportunity for instantly gratifying interaction may open people up to the more challenging act of listening to the pre-constructed sound composition and placing the sounds themselves.

3.4 Section Four: Challenges and Limitations

3.4.1 My Role as an Observer and Creative Responder

My role as ethnographer of the festival and artist of an exhibition developed as a creative response to that festival, makes me a participant observer. While observing the festival, I attempted to maintain an outsider's perspective; in my creative work, however, I attempted to connect with the same community that I tried to distance myself from as a researcher. This dual positioning poses a few challenges to conducting the research, including negotiating my relationship with Dhanaraj, the way I am perceived by the community, and the impact these things have on the effectiveness of my research and creative work.

My work with Dhanaraj aimed to blend our visual and sonic aesthetics across a thematic structure, while our positions within the community during Theyyam were completely different. Dhanaraj is a native of Keezhara, while I am a complete outsider. He is seen as an artist by his own community, and therefore somewhat alternative while I am seen as a western woman who is his artist-friend. The dynamics of gender, nationality, skin color, and socio economic class

all contribute to the ways in which we are seen by the people of Keezhara, and the lens through which our artistic work is considered.

While I am obviously an outsider to the community of Keezhara, my artwork attempts to connect with the people of the community, as do I. My physical appearance, style of dress, and limited linguistic skills in Malayalam are easily identifiable. Being known through my connection to Dhanaraj, as his artist and teacher friend, meant that my presence did not seem to be viewed as threatening, nor was my artistic creation considered inherently problematic as the work of a foreigner. On the contrary, the exhibition was received well by the community. Not all liked the exhibition, and not all of the content was well received, or understood, but the work on as a whole was supported.

My work was very much received as something people did not expect to connect with. Having lived in India before, I had first-hand experience with some common stereotypes about Americans. My experience was that many of their perceptions of US culture came from television shows like *Friends* or Hollywood movies. I'm not sure if, when people walked into the exhibition, they took the soundscape seriously. I'm not sure if they saw it as informed and positioned as art. I am not sure if the community understood the printed mission statement of the exhibition because visual representations of Theyyam are common in Kerala and often simply beautiful representations of the Folkloric Culture, but not associated with any type of activist mission.

Dhanaraj's artistic work challenges people's perceptions and assumptions in Keezhara, as he is a very experimental artist by the village's standards. Dhanaraj has painted public spaces in the village, and been invited to contribute to the arts program at the local school. His love for Keezhara, as well as the fact

that his mother still resides there, prompts his family's frequent visits to the village. His personal interactions with members of the community have an impact on people's perceptions of his artwork.

My ability to challenge people's perceptions of me was a bit more difficult. Maintaining an ongoing relationship to Keezhara and socializing with Dhanaraj's community of friends and family served as a touch point, connecting me to the community. Having worked as a teacher in other cities and rural communities in India including, Bangalore, Delhi, and in rural Rajasthan, I had gained a certain level of familiarity with some of the traditions and aspects of livelihood in the village, which made it easier for the villagers to get to know me. For example, people often commented on my eating habits and the fact that I ate their food, or ate with my hands. Similarly the support of Folklore Akademi, a locally respected and understood organization that sponsored our exhibition, brought context and validity to the artistic work and to my presence in the community, as well as an expectation of the way the exhibit would appropriately represent the Theyyam community.

The Malayalam newspapers and local television coverage changed people's perception of my work in the community, making people more interested in the work, and more accepting of me as a foreigner in their community, and as an artist making art about their community. The connection and support received from Dhanaraj, The Folklore Akademi, and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, allowed the project to be woven into the community's social fabric, understanding, and consciousness—making the project more accessible to the members of the community. The support and coverage from local news outfits and respected organizations of culture and heritage, gave Dhanaraj and me a

type of authority in representing Theyyam in Keezhara. It also gave our project a stamp of approval from the outside, allowing it to be seen by Theyyam performers and nearby communities as a project that was within the bounds of local tradition and acceptance, while bearing the name of a foreigner. Even though I am concerned about the way my positionality as a foreigner to the community of Keezhara poses a limitation on my ability to have an impact through the exhibition, my presence and ongoing commitment to the community opened people up to the exhibition.

The notion of soundscape was also completely new to the members of the community with whom I spoke. The newspaper and television journalists consistently represented the exhibition as introducing a new concept into the Kannur art scene, the fusion of visual images and sound. The response to the media coverage was positive; however, the novelty of the approach meant that most of the visitors to the exhibition did not have a reference point for an art exhibit that included sound, when the sound did not accompany a movie.

The challenge of my position as both observer of the community and as an artist who engaged with the community, has made a difference to the overall goal of the exhibit in that it allowed people to engage with the exhibit differently because there was a familiarity with the artists. The community members of Keezhara came to the exhibit to support Dhanaraj, and because they were intrigued by our artistic collaboration, which was visually present in their community during the festival, and because there were visual and sonic representations of the Theyyam artists and community members of Keezhara in the exhibition. The goal of the exhibit was to agitate people's thinking about

caste marginalization in relation to Theyyam, and to get people from Keezhara to attend the exhibition and explore alongside their community members.

My role as an observer and outsider to Theyyam allowed me to see and hear things that members of the community could not. Everything about the festival was new and unknown to me, as though I was a child first experiencing things in life. Not having any basis for comparison made me less likely to be desensitized to details that community members might disregard as essential to the experience. In essence I brought a different type of awareness to my observation and experience in Keezhara.

My visual and sonic assumptions of the festival were completely different from that of someone who had experienced the festival throughout their life. For example, when the Theyyam performance is happening, the audience's attention is drawn to the performer; however, my attention was often focused toward the audience's experience of the performer. For me, the community members' responses to the performance were as interesting as the performance itself. This may be due in part to the fact that I do not have a religious association with the festival in the way the members of the community do. Whereas a community member might be drawn into the process of the godly embodiment unfolding through the performance, I do not have the cultural frame of reference to truly understand the religious and spiritual aspects of the festival, and as a result my focus is not oriented in the same way.

The last Theyyam performance of the festival is a huge spectacle that attracts hundreds of onlookers from neighboring villages. The local television network covered the evening's performance, and the open ground adjacent to the temple became heavily populated like a fairground. On this day between the

Thottam and Vellatam performances, toy vendors rolled their carts onto the grounds, and peanut roasting stations were erected. I spent a good portion of that early afternoon speaking to the peanut vendor, recording the sounds of his metal spatula hitting against and sweeping the rounded metal dish as he roasted the peanuts, which became this clacking sound of metal on metal muted by the peanuts. I became fascinated by the contribution of these sounds to the Theyyam soundscape, a detail that most onlookers would not consider.

The musical elements of the festival are another example of a sonic detail that I became very interested in, but which may not interest someone familiar with the festival. My eyes were glued to the musicians in the background during the Theyyam performances. They were assembled in a half moon surrounding the Theyyam performer, and the audience was assembled in a circle surrounding the musicians and the Theyyam character. My gaze would often bounce from performer to temple minder, then toward the audience and onward toward the musicians. I found myself interested in every aspect of the event. I was fascinated by the temple minder's role within the performances, what they were tasked with doing, and how they were associated with the performance families. During some performances a member of the Theyyam artist family would walk from the side lines into the middle of the performance to help the Theyyam performer, tighten their headdress, or fix a piece of their costume.

My position as an outsider and observer meant, as well, that there were things I did not hear in part because I do not speak Malayalam. I am aware that as an outsider I was mapping my own experience onto the community of Keezhara, especially with regard to the exhibition. I mapped onto them my experiences and expectations about how to engage audiences, what I thought would be

problematic or interesting to them, and what I thought they might like or dislike. These perceptions were partially rooted in my experiences in Keezhara and India more broadly, but also tied to my opinions and preconceived approach to exhibiting work.

Within the exhibit, Dhanaraj and I addressed caste marginalization, a topic that is often considered taboo in the Indian context. Coming from the outside, I assumed it was likely that we would mount the exhibition but possibly miss our audience, because we were introducing ideas that might not be appropriate for the community, and which the community did not have a good way of accessing given the social stigma tied to the subject matter.

The same week that the exhibition was mounted in Kannur, there was a Muttapan Theyyam being held nearby as part of a blessing for the site of a new temple that a community wanted to build. Krishnan, one of Dhanaraj's friends whom I had met during the exhibition, took me to the Theyyam. The leader of the community recognized me, as he was a photographer for a newspaper that covered the exhibition, which he had visited several times that week. As a result I was welcomed and greeted very positively by the community. This experience helped me better understand how someone is understood as an insider or an outsider within a community. Though I was a complete outsider to this community, I was treated as an outsider who came with references, which uniquely positioned me to explore things within that community.

In my role as creative responder and artist I was able to gain access to the Theyyam artists in a different way than I could during the festival when they were completely consumed with preparations and performances. The exhibition hall, unlike the festival, provided a space where Theyyam artists and community

members jointly participated in casting their gaze elsewhere. The conversations I was able to have with visitors to the exhibition were very different from those that happened during the festival. This may be tied to my having met many of the community members for the first time during the festival, and possibly that the exhibition provided an opportunity for people to engage me in something I had created or made. During the festival, the entry point for conversation was often my engaging members of the community about the festival. Sometimes people would engage me about my equipment, or why I was in Keezhara, but infrequently about much else. At the exhibition, however, people consistently approached me to talk about articles in the paper, the exhibition, Abu Dhabi, and one woman who was an art teacher in Keezhara approached me to discuss art.

The visitors to the exhibition felt a freedom to criticize, which I really appreciated. People asked about why I chose to express the recorded sounds in a particular way and some visitors to the exhibit wanted to share their thoughts and feelings about my artistic choices. This consistent engagement was very different from my more measured interactions with the community during the festival. The exhibition felt like a created space that leveled the playing field. During the festival I was in Keezhara as a researcher, observing the festival, Theyyam artists and community members, while at the exhibition the tables were turned and I was now putting my work and self on display, providing an opportunity for the members of Keezhara to observe and critique me and my work.

3.4.2 Limitations

My ability to spend time in Keezhara, as well as sponsorship from the Kerala Folklore Akademi, was directly related to having the trust of the people who trusted Dhanaraj. As collaborators, we were on the same page about the motivation for the exhibition, about the research and time spent in Keezhara, and about the process of developing the work. At each step of the way we checked in with one another, and when appropriate, delegated aspects of the process to each other. For example, Dhanaraj handled the rental of the exhibition hall and the communications with the Folklore Akademi prior to my arrival in Kerala for the exhibition; while I handled writing the English flyers and communications for the exhibition, he handled writing the Malyalam counterparts. However, we both arrived in Kannur and hit the ground running to take care of all last minute matters in preparation for the exhibition, including having invitations and brochures printed for VIP invites and guests. We also both worked tirelessly setting up the exhibition hall and taking down the exhibition.

The challenge of the space was a major limitation of the exhibition, specifically in our ability to clearly communicate ideas to the audience. Overall the work was exhibited well, and artistically we felt that we were successful in communicating what we intended to; however the space did prove to be a limitation. The soundscape was mixed and spacialized in a studio environment, then transported to India where it needed to be setup and configured in the exhibition hall in one day. The first set of challenges were logistical and pertaining to power and mounting of the speakers in the space; this took several hours and required a few trips to hardware stores to obtain the correct screws, tools, twine, etc. Ultimately the speakers were mounted safely and in an ideal

configuration for the composition and the space. The first run-through of the composition revealed that the overall levels of the piece were completely off for the type of hall and its openness to a city street, which allowed for noise bleed from nearby establishments, motor vehicles and people walking past. At the same time as I was working out these challenges, Dhanaraj was working hard with a few friends to hang the entire show of more than one hundred pieces, which of course contributed to additional noise in the space, and changed the acoustics of the space, as his canvases added immense isolation to the otherwise concrete and tiled room. These limitations affected the quality of the exhibited work, the clarity of the soundscape, and at times, especially within the first day of the exhibition, it meant that the levels of the exhibition were being mixed on the fly to accommodate how sonically the space accommodated varying numbers of visitors, as well as the outside sounds of the community surrounding the hall.

3.5 Section Five: Conclusion

3.5.1 Time, Place, and Infinite Convergences

While the purpose of the exhibition was to attempt to mitigate caste discrimination, the purpose of this dissertation is to focus on ways in which creative response might work differently than more traditional archiving. The question of whether or not artistic portrayals of Theyyam artists helped to mitigate caste marginalization cannot be answered completely with either a yes or no. Feedback on the exhibit showed that the visitors were engaged with the work—in some cases the medium of the exhibition was surprising or unsettling,

particularly our inclination to disconnect the sonic and visual material as to not create a one-to-one relationship, and in other cases audience members were happy to see representations that creatively augmented realistic portrayals of Theyyam, as it represented something new. Our presence in Keezhara during the festival, and the exhibition itself clearly stirred things up, but it is impossible to understand how far-reaching such effects were.

Activism is about making change in the world, and that change relies on being open within one self, and opening ourselves up to others around us. In order to expect others to open themselves up to new things, we must first be willing to be changed by the work in the world. Matthew Goulish expresses this same sentiment by communicating the idea that we do not need to find a way into a work, since the work is already inside us. (Goulish, 2000). He tells us that a work works where when it becomes human, and that this becoming occurs when we realize it:

A work is an object overflowing its frame. Work is an event in which the human participates; the human is an organism that works. A work works when it becomes an event of work. A work works when it becomes human. This becoming occurs when we realize it. Specifically, it occurs when we realize it where it occurs. It occurs inside. We do not need to find a way into a work, since the work is already inside. Instead we realize a work and its harmony with our point of view. Then it and we begin to work, and the play of work begins. (p. 100).

By applying Goulish's take on the notion of work, our creative response to the Theyyam Festival "works" in ways that exceed the boundaries of the exhibition. As a participant-observer, I'm not only watching to see if Dhanaraj's

art helps mitigate caste marginalization, I'm collaborating with him as an artist to do the work I'm wondering about. Part of that collaboration is being an outsider to the community of Keezhara and learning to experience Keezhara where it is, as well as the community learning to experience me at the point where I enter their village.

Ghoulsh states, that "a work is an object overflowing its frame." (Goulsh, 2000, p. 100). Much of the impact of the work Dhanaraj and I created occurs outside the walls of the exhibition hall, in many other facets of life from the social and political realms to the personal sit-downs and meet-and-greets. The things that "overflow the frame" take many forms, including riding the train to Kannur with Dhanaraj and his family and sleeping in his mother's house. It is about the numerous newspaper articles that were written by journalists about the artistic collaboration. The overflowing of the frame includes holding the exhibition in the Indian Medical Association Hall with the Folklore Akademi's backing and branding, rather than a fancy air-conditioned, airtight gallery space. The work collaboration with Dhanaraj is important not only for the value of the art itself, but for all of the political and social forces at play that extend outside the visual and sonic boundaries of that work, such as the bringing together of the Theyyam artists and the lay community members to view an artistic representation of Theyyam.

Initially this research and the resulting exhibition were rooted in Dhanaraj's political interests and concerns about the state of caste issues in his native village. The collaboration, resulting research, and artistic work were built on this key question. My artistic work of soundscape design and sonic composition is rooted in this same question and very much in support of

Dhanaraj's key political interests, however my artistic approach seems to have problematized Theyyam for the people of Keezhara in a way that Dhanaraj's work does not. My work disrupted or challenged the community members' expectations of how Theyyam is represented in two key ways. The first is tied to my status as a foreigner coming into the community of Keezhara, where my presence, which is tied to my identity as a Western woman in post-colonial India, serves as a disruption to the community, something that is noticed and which draws people's attention and intrigue, as it deviates from their expectation.

The second way in which my artistic approach problematizes Theyyam is rooted in the sonic nature of my work. As I have mentioned previously, though the festival relies on many sonic elements—from music to chant to oral tradition—the representations of the festival, whether in museums, on television, or in newspapers, are of static images or video. My approach of separating and disconnecting the visual and sonic elements of the festival, then further transforming the sonic elements into a soundscape of composed material, disrupted the expectation people had of a sonic representation of Theyyam.

Jonathan Sterne asserts, "it is the ear, not the eye, that offers a path into relations of power" (Sterne, 2012). When we apply Sterne's sentiment to the soundscape of *Everyday Life*, the findings of this ethnography become clearer. Theyyam as a festival is colorful, loud, and very much a spectacle within each village it is performed. Photographs of Theyyam are common, familiar, and easily found throughout the Malabar region, as well as more globally through a Google image search, and on Facebook, where there are several groups dedicated to Theyyam. Tour companies use photographs of Theyyam characters on their

promotional brochures and websites, and even the Kerala Folklore Akademi has published a book by Sreekanth A. Trikaripur, entitled *Mooring Mirror. A Mooring Mirror Between Man and God*, that contains hundreds of color photographs of Theyyam characters. The community of Keezhara has been flooded with visual representations of Theyyam; Dhanaraj's visual work, though often focused on the people rather than the characters of Theyyam, is easily contextualized and understood as a direct visual representation of the festival.

Sterne's commentary is akin to Jacques Attali's essay, *Bruits: essai sur l'économie politique de la musique*, published in French in 1977, and translated into English in 1985 by Brian Massumi as "Noise: The Political Economy of Music". In his essay Attali argues that "more than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies." (Attali, 1985, p. 6). Perhaps the soundscape composition presented in the *Everyday Life* exhibit overflows the frame of the work itself in part because it presents the community of Keezhara with an aural commentary, which is unfamiliar and out of context in its application to Theyyam.

An earlier reference in this chapter spoke of a Theyyam performer who expressed agitation and frustration that the sounds he was hearing in the exhibition were not completely accurate, and that the artwork should serve more of a structuralist approach for identification and playback of specific sounds as they pair with images of the sound source. The performer's inclination toward wanting a sonic representation that serves to be descriptive of an image makes sense. The soundscape immersed listeners in a sonic representation of the festival that did not match the real, which caused discomfort and led to considering the question, *What is it that we are listening to?* This disruption of

the sonic order of Theyyam by way of a composition that interrupts and disrupts that which is commonly understood, has the potential to disrupt or change the culture of the village. Attali proposes that at present there is a new musical practice emerging that heralds the arrival of new social relations, and which destroys orders and creates new ones. I believe the *Everyday Life* exhibition contributed to this kind of radical restructuring.

Today in embryonic form, beyond repetition, lies freedom: more than a new music, a fourth kind of musical practice. It heralds the arrival of new social relations. Music is becoming *composition*. *Representation against fear, repetition against harmony, composition against normality*. It is this interplay of concepts that music invites us to enter, in its capacity as the herald of organizations and their overall political strategies—noise that destroys orders to structure a new order. A highly illuminating foundation for social analysis and a resurgence of inquiry about man. (Attali, 1985, p. 20).

Once a listener actively listens, they will consider and possibly question that which they are hearing, just as someone who looks will consider what they are seeing. This might cause agitation, and a rift against that which is understood to be normal. Looked at this way, the exhibition was successful in that Dhanaraj and I were in the community and we agitated the people. We were in the paper and on the news. The work we aimed to do was never art for art's sake, but rather artists attempting to create an impact with their art in a community.

The human element made our artistic work what it was. Part of this work extended into the audience, causing the audience to consider what they were

seeing and hearing, and in some cases to ask questions of the work. This research project unveiled inquiry, agitation, and consideration in us, as well as the audience. Similar to J. J. Pallath's critique of the power reversal between the Pulayas and the upper caste during the Theyyam festival, the exhibition provided the community members an opportunity to assume a role more similar to observer, where they could critique me as the outsider and comment on my work with just cause. This put the community members in a position of power, which provided a type of exchange, or to use Pallath's words, a role reversal, in the dynamics between the researcher/observer, and the community, allowing them to critique their own community and the Theyyam festival while masked behind the critique of an outsider and an artist.

4. Lest We Forget

4. Lest We Forget

4.1 Section One: An Introduction

4.1.1 Introduction

The Lest We Forget project began as a collection of vernacular photographs from Emirati family photo albums. The collection is unique in its fusing of artistic practice alongside traditional archival techniques. The photographs, objects, and oral histories contributed by community members are the basis for the development of creative mixed-media responses that become the content at the heart of the *Lest We Forget* book and exhibitions inspired by the project.

These creative responses were developed largely by college-age female Emirati students in response to photographs of their parents and grandparents. The students conduct interviews with their family members about the photographs and objects, and in addition to writing down the stories revealed through the interviews, create artistic responses as reflections on the stories they hear. The interviews conducted by the students capture interesting and important stories, trends, memories, and history of the UAE, which are the inspiration for the development of creative responses in the form of digital narratives, audio recordings, films, and games that are showcased alongside the family photographs in the Lest We Forget Exhibition in the Warehouse 421 Gallery Space in Abu Dhabi.

To date, Lest We Forget has developed and opened five exhibitions, published two books, begun a national archive, and held dozens of workshops and talks organized around the themes of national identity, culture, architecture,

and heritage in the United Arab Emirates. In March 2013, *Lest We Forget: Emirati Vernacular Photography* was exhibited at Zayed University's Art Gallery, and afterward moved to the Qasr Al Hosn Museum as a permanent exhibition. Qasr Al Hosn, which translates to Palace Fort, is the oldest standing building in Abu Dhabi, dating back to 1761, and was for many years the permanent residence of the ruling Sheikh of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

My involvement in the project spanned from 2011-2016, and during that time I contributed as an artist, an educator, and a collaborator to *Lest We Forget*, through a partnership with Creative Director, Michele Bambling, her team, and the other artistic collaborators who worked with the project. My contributions to the project were a hybrid of teaching workshops, mentoring, providing technical guidance for the collection development, digital preservation and metadata documentation, the development of the content and design for a web-based collection, as well as technical support and media development for the exhibitions.

4.2 Section Two: Context

4.2.1 Abu Dhabi and the UAE

According to the World Bank, the population of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as of 2014 was 9.086 million. In 1971 when the seven Trucial States—Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Um Al Quwain, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaima—unified under the first president of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the total population was 272,211. According to the UAE's Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority Census data from 2005 (FCSA, 2005),

the total population of the UAE in 2005 was 4,106,427, while the Emirati population of the UAE was 825,495—making the Emirati population roughly 20% of the national population. In the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the total population in 2005 was 1,399,484, while the national population was 350,277 making the Emirati population roughly 25%, with a non-Emirati expatriate contingent making up roughly 75% of the population.

The UAE has undergone rapid modernization over the last 40 years; prior to that, the country was largely composed of semi-nomadic Bedouin communities. In the Bedouin tradition, tribes settle in one geographic area and then move together as a community based on factors including the climate, access to water, and time of year. The modern cities of the UAE, namely Abu Dhabi and Dubai, were largely uninhabited during the warmer months of the year, when the temperature can reach upwards of 50 degrees Celsius, as tribes would settle in the country's oases and mountainous regions.

The UAE's main source of wealth is its oil reserves, which have supported the country's rapid development and modernization. The UAE's approach to development has been to leverage the expertise of individuals and companies from around the globe. This includes the development of vast infrastructure systems throughout the country, including power and water; planned urban development projects, like land dredging to increase the size of the cities; new architectural feats; aviation development; and the targeted growth and development of industries, including hotels and hospitality, education, hospitals and medical systems, and most recently educational and cultural institutions.

Over the past seven years, the government of Abu Dhabi has invested significant resources into the planning and development of Saadiyat Island,

which is intended to be the hub of education and culture in Abu Dhabi. These projects include: New York University Abu Dhabi, where I have worked for the past seven years; Manarat Al Saadiyat, the city's artistic gallery space and current home of the UAE Pavilion; The Louvre Abu Dhabi, which is projected to be completed by 2017; the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, which had not broken ground as of April 2016; and the Zayed National Museum in partnership with the British Museum.

4.2.2 Michele Bambling and the Zayed University Students

I first met Michele Bambling in 2010 through a mutual friend in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Our collaboration began with Michele's Living National Treasures Project, which she worked on before completing her PhD in Japanese art history. The project consisted of interviewing Japan's oldest traditional makers of national treasures. She had more than one hundred audiocassettes of recorded interviews, and thousands of negatives of photographs that needed to be digitized, transcribed, edited, and tagged. I managed the digitization and archiving of the audio material and the negatives, which included editing and tagging the material with a variety of metadata parameters, such as the name of the person being interviewed, their profession, and the geography in which the interview took place. We began the process of reconstructing digital narratives of the national treasures through the development of vignette video pieces that are intended to be a part of a bigger project on Japanese National Treasures and Cultural Heritage.

Shortly after working on the Living National Treasures project, Michele reached out to ask if I would be interested in participating in a new project that she was working on with her students at Zayed University on Emirati cultural heritage. I was very interested in the project from the beginning, and was lucky to be able to see the project grow from its inception in 2011. While I was not involved in the first year of the project, I did hear about it through interviews and conversations with Michele, and I saw the first exhibition tied to *Lest We Forget*, a showcase of student work from Michele's classes, held at Zayed University's (ZU) CACE Art Gallery. I was struck by the breadth of the exhibition and the way it seamlessly wove together hard-to-access and precious Emirati historical materials with an informal student-driven approach to artistic curation. The exhibition felt both polished (an aesthetic so common in the presentation of artistic work of any caliber in the Emirates that it is expected) and creatively haphazard in an authentic way that indicated a work-in-progress.

The project began as a homework assignment in Michele Bambling's curation class at Zayed University's Women's College in Abu Dhabi. Michele asked her students to bring in photographs from their family albums. Having lived in the UAE for five years at the time, she was familiar with cultural sensitivities and privacy within the Emirati community, and anticipated that the girls might not easily acquire family photographs. Her students first responded to the project with hesitation, offering explanations for why bringing in the family photographs might be challenging, such as it being difficult to speak with their fathers about the request, not knowing where the photographs were, or that their families would not allow it. Eventually the girls found ways to speak to their families and get the photographs, and they came to class with photographs

of their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or brothers, and this is where the conversation began.

Yet the students were dissatisfied with a photographic representation of their community where images of girls and women were missing. They told stories of encountering great pushback when they asked their mothers and grandmothers if they could share their photographs in class. One student told a story about how her grandmother ripped up a bunch of photographs so that they could not be shared in a public arena. Some of the girls were able to acquire photographs of women in their families; though many of these photographs were not of the women's faces, but rather of their hands, or taken from behind, as this was often done out of respect for women's modesty.

When Michele talks about her experience collecting photographs of girls and women in the UAE, she recounts conversations she had with the mothers and grandmothers who wanted to give photographs, and who felt it was important that they contribute photographs of themselves to the collection. "Some were given to me by the grandmothers themselves. They wanted to share them because they wanted to be remembered and they wanted their daughters and granddaughters to see that they dressed differently back then." Michele went on to share how many of the students who looked at the pictures of women were surprised to see the *abaya* [traditional black robe worn by women in the Emirates] was only loosely covering their clothes or that the *shayla* [traditional black scarf used to cover a woman's hair] wasn't so tightly wrapped; there was casualness, but there were a lot of pictures that show just the hands of the women cooking, or part of the body, without photographing their faces.

To broaden the student's perspectives about the value of vernacular photography, and about what could be done with the photographs they collected, students were exposed to other vernacular photography projects and archives in class. One of these projects was aka Kurdistan, a project by Photographer Susan Meiselas, whose aim was to provide the Kurdish people with a borderless space to build collective memory through photography and storytelling. Michele invited Susan Meiselas to her class to lecture and facilitate workshops on the process of building a photographic collection of personal and family stories. Meiselas participated heavily in the initial creative workshops that informed the exhibition at Zayed University, and was instrumental in the organization, presentation, and layout of the book, *Lest We Forget: Emirati Family Photographs 1950-1999*.

Michele developed a curriculum that asked students to use studio art techniques, including stitching, drawing, and coloring, as well as digital media tools, such as Adobe Photoshop and Indesign, to highlight elements of photographs that were of interest. The students also explored notions of self-representation, creating images of themselves they would feel comfortable showcasing to the University community. Throughout the course of the semester the students continued their work on transformations and creative interpretations of photographs of themselves and those of family members that they were given permission to share with the class.

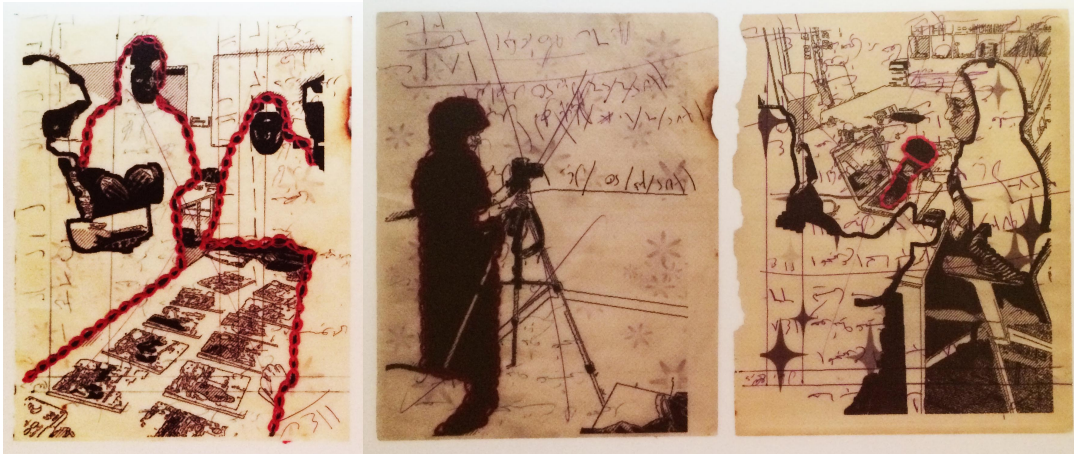


Image 4.1 The images above are examples of artistic responses the students created to photographs taken of themselves during the development of the Zayed University exhibit. These images were included in the exhibition at ZU, as well as the exhibit at Warehouse 421.

4.2.3 How I Became Involved with Lest We Forget

In 2012, after the Zayed University exhibition, Michele asked if I would be interested and willing to work with her on further developing the project. At that time she was organizing a series of creative workshops that would provide her team and groups of rotating interns with a creative and technical skill set to be used in the development of films and oral histories in response to the photographic collection that was under development. I was eager to get involved and was interested in the questions Michele's project asked about how we might think of developing a national archive that is cross-generational, and which from the onset values engagement with creative practice. My skills and interests in oral history and recorded documentation, along with a preoccupation with the inclusion of creative practice in my teaching, made me excited to work on the project.

I was initially invited to participate in the project as a sound artist and asked to develop a six-week workshop for the interns on sound recording and narrative development. The six-week workshop met twice per week for the full

day. The first meeting was roundtable lesson, discussion, and hands on learning, while the second meeting of the week was a group critique of the content the girls developed. The workshop was specifically geared toward teaching interns how to record family stories, conversations, and interviews, and how to then edit these recordings, and weave together narratives from them for the collection and exhibitions. The creative sound responses to the main table of photographs within the Warehouse 421 Exhibition were all conceived of, recorded, and edited within my workshop. Lest We Forget took on batches of interns who studied art and design at Zayed University's Women's college. The girls (the respectful term used to refer to unmarried female undergraduate students in the UAE), would spend six weeks interning with LWF, learning new skills, helping to build the collection, and in some cases staying on as interns or employees of the project after the internship ended.

4.2.4 LWF Before I Became Involved

Lest We Forget has grown into a major grassroots arts and heritage initiative in the UAE that aims to archive, preserve and share vernacular photographs and oral histories of the UAE through its web presence, publications, workshops, and exhibitions. Lest We Forget is tackling the challenge of building an archive of a nation that has undergone rapid development and change since 1971, but which has only recently begun to document that process through the collection of materials and interviews with the community. At present the collection is comprised of vernacular

photographs and objects that are contributed by Emirati's from their homes, along with creative responses to these photographs and objects.

However, the project did not start out this way. In March 2013, Michele Bambling and her Zayed University students curated an exhibition at the University's CACE Gallery entitled *Lest We Forget: Emirati Family Photography 1950-1999*. The exhibition was inaugurated by His Highness Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the UAE minister of Culture and the President of Zayed University. The exhibition was the culmination of two years of work by students in several of Michele's classes. The gallery was broken into a number of spaces, each of which contained a curated installation organized around a theme, all inspired by photographs and objects student's had shared from their family homes and albums. There were two long tables in the center of the gallery that held the book in progress, *Lest We Forget*, along with many excerpts, photographs, and creative works that served as examples of that which would be contained within the 300-plus-page book. Old typewriters were on display with both English and Arabic lettered keys. The typewriters were used by students and visitors to type up stories about their family photographs, some were of photographs already included in the book, while others were new contributions. Visitors were welcome to use the typewriters, and for many of the gallery's younger visitors it may have been their first such opportunity, as antiquated mechanical and electronic devices are difficult to find in Abu Dhabi; these items are often discarded from people's homes when newer technologies became available.

The student artists circulated throughout the gallery during the opening reception, serving as guides for the general public as they roamed the exhibition.

The girls spoke about the genesis of the work, the ideas that ultimately led to the exhibit, the individual installations, as well as the cultural and historical background of the exhibit. One installation had a looped video clip projected onto pieces of brightly multicolored fabric hanging from the ceiling. In the video, which based on its quality appeared to be from the 1980s, young Emirati girls dressed in fancy clothing and walked around a crowd of people tossing their hair back and forth. One of the student artists from Michele's class explained that the video was of a traditional Emirati dance that was performed by girls at special events like weddings.

A second installation was setup like a living room or *majlis* (seating area) in someone's home. The audience could look at the living room but not sit in it. The objects in the space were mostly familiar, including televisions, old couches, and coffeepots. A student explained that the installation attempted to reproduce a traditional Emirati home from the 1980s, and that in the present day it is extremely difficult to find many of these objects in an Emirati home, as they have been discarded. The mother of the student who donated the objects was very taken with older furnishings and keeps a collection in her home. The installations were varied, including Emirati women and girls clothing dating back to the 1970s, as well as an installation that included recorded audio narratives and briefcases of objects, several that featured video pieces, and a number that showcased original photographs thematically, as in the example of the installation of photographs of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and first president of the UAE. Students had collected family photographs with Sheikh Zayed, and placed them on a table that had light bulbs protruding from it. The student's then drew eyes on the light bulbs, which left

interesting reflections and shadows on the images on the table, as a commentary on Sheikh Zayed's watchful eye over the people of the nation.

The exhibition gained publicity and exposure in the community. The project received backing from The Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, who then asked Michele to sign on as the creative director of the project, which she did, leaving her academic position at Zayed University. *Lest We Forget: Emirati Family Photography 1950-1999*, moved from Zayed University's CACE gallery to the Qasr Al Hosn Museum.

In addition to housing the exhibition, the Qasr Al Hosn Museum served as LWF's main venue for workshops and events. Michele and her team programmed a series of workshops with members of the community, as well as students and teachers from the UAE. They invited guest lecturers, filmmakers, artists, students, community members, and academics to speak about topics intimately tied to the project. The goal of these events was to bring people together to have conversations about culture, history, and memory in the UAE. Workshops became a place where new ideas were developed, and where people who felt passionately about the project would bring their photographs and objects to contribute to the collection.

Lest We Forget has been asked to represent the UAE in several projects and national celebrations. In 2014 *Lest We Forget: Structures of Memory in the UAE*, represented the UAE at the National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and in February 2015 the exhibit was re-erected as the central gallery of the Qasr Al Hosn Festival in Abu Dhabi. The exhibit examined the architectural history of Abu Dhabi in the 1970s and '80s. In November 2015, *Lest We Forget: Emirati Family Photographs 1950-1999* opened as the central exhibition at Warehouse

421, a new gallery housed under the cultural heritage initiative of the Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, located in Abu Dhabi's Mina Zayed Port District.

4.2.5 The Warehouse 421 Exhibition

The Lest We Forget Project overseas the curation of exhibitions for the main gallery space at Warehouse 421. Each installation in the current exhibition was built around a theme from the book *Lest We Forget: Emirati Family Photographs 1950-1999*, and incorporates into the exhibits physical pages from the book. (See image 4.2) The book intends to capture the state of the vernacular photography collection to date, as well as the stories about the photographs from the families who contributed them, and creative responses to the photographs by Emirati college students. The book release coincided with the gallery opening.



Image 4.2 The introduction wall to the Warehouse 421 exhibition of Lest We Forget, where pages of the book are showcased. The pages represented in this photograph span the organizational themes of the book, which were used as the basis for the organization of the installations within the gallery.

One example of a theme-based exhibit at the Warehouse 421 gallery is the telephone room, which is organized around the book theme of “Aloo,” a colloquial way of saying “hello,” or things that pertain to the telephone. The following is an example of a page of the book that was included in the telephone room installation, which shows a couple telephoning home during their Haj Pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. This photograph is taken from page 254 of the *Lest We Forget* book, and is overlaid with a transparency of the student’s hand written story from her interview with her mother about the photograph (Image 4.3).

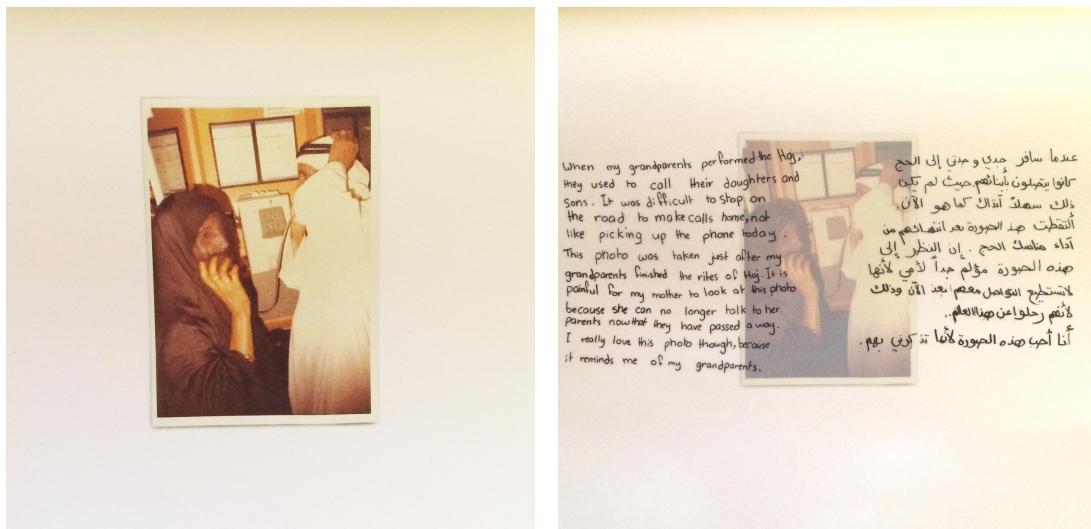


Image 4.3 Image and handwritten overlay from page 254 of the *Lest We Forget* Book.

Visitors can enter the telephone installation, a small sparsely furnished space with two chairs and two rotary telephones. On one telephone, a visitor can dial a number between 0 and 9 to listen in on pre-recorded telephone conversations meant to mimic a child’s experience picking up a telephone in their home—before cell phones—and listening in on their parents’ conversations. The second telephone provides visitors with an opportunity to record their own telephone conversation from their own memories. The page from the book containing this photograph is affixed to the wall of the telephone

room installation, alongside several other pages from the “Aloo” section. The pages on the wall serve as a link, tying together the student’s sonic and written responses to the telephone photographs, with some of the photographs that served as their inspiration. This room, along with several others in the exhibition, solicits participation from visitors of the gallery in the form of their own creative response to the archival photographs and stories in the book and the creative responses of the phone conversations they listened to on the phone.

The *Lest We Forget* exhibition at Warehouse 421 also included a car installation, where one of the intern’s interviews with her father about his Thunderbird, as well as ambient recordings of the car horn and ignition startup, were featured alongside photographs and stories of people in the UAE with their first cars (Image 4.4).

The following photograph was included in the car installation at the exhibition.



Image 4.4 The caption that accompanies this photograph from page 298 of the *Lest We Forget* Book reads as follows: This photo of my mother was taken when she was about 3 years old. She is posing with her two cousins in front of a Volkswagon beetle that my late grandfather owned. They all had similar matching outfits, which were trendy back then, especially in Eid. My mother’s cousin is holding her new doll still packaged. It seems like the doll was an Eid gift, sometimes in Eid they would give the kids gifts as well as money.

Immense support of the exhibition from the government of the UAE has created high visibility for Lest We Forget within the community, which has translated into greater interest in and contribution to the archive. At present, Lest We Forget is in conversations about representing the UAE's cultural heritage for the Dubai 2020 Expo. Like many archival arts projects, Lest We Forget favors workshops, interviews, and in-person engagement over strictly relying on a web presence, in support of collection development. As Hal Foster tells us, "in most archival art the actual means applied to these 'relational' ends are far more tactile and face-to-face than any Web interface" (Foster, 2004, p. 4). It is exactly this approach of fluidity and interpersonal engagement that has gained the Lest We Forget project participation and interest from the Emirati community, a culture where privacy is prized.

4.3 Section Three: Original Contributions

4.3.1. The Workshops

My involvement began when Michele asked me to develop a six-week workshop for a recently recruited group of interns from Zayed University, some of whom were her former students. The workshop focused on the development of creative responses to vernacular photographs through the medium of recorded sound. The girls spent the six weeks developing digital narratives in response to photographs of their parents and grandparents. These responses were informed by discussions among the girls in the workshops on topics such as historical and cultural differences in gender, clothing, travel, cars, and antiquated technologies. The workshops primary goal was for the interns to

develop 82 sonic narratives, in Arabic and English, which would be showcased in conjunction with 82 vernacular photographs in the exhibition at Warehouse 421 (Image 4.5).



Image 4.5 This image is of the 82 photographs on the photo table in the exhibition. Each photograph has an audio icon printed at the top of the page with a number that visitors can use in the web app to hear stories of the photograph.

The workshop ran twice per week for nearly the whole day, contingent on the intern's personal availability. Someone would be out sick, or have a family obligation, at least once per week. The workshop was designed to introduce the girls to the ideas of narrative and to provide them with the necessary technical skills to develop sonic responses. I developed a curriculum in advance of the workshops (see Appendix B) that aimed for one meeting per week, but it became clear once we began meeting that a weekly meeting plus a weekly critique would best support one of the intended outcomes of the workshop; for the interns to develop sonic creative responses for each of the 82 photographs in the first exhibit of the Warehouse 421 exhibition.

I designed the workshops to introduce the girls to a variety of concepts including the relationship between form in visual and sonic materials, to sound mapping, the notion of recorded sound accompanying visual material, and helping guide a viewer through a curated sonic experience. During the first workshop we listened to examples of different kinds of online collections with recorded sound, learned how to discern good quality recorded audio from bad, along with some of the language to differentiate qualities of recorded audio, for example the sound being too hot, recorded at too high a level or too close to the sound source. The girls learned about monitoring audio, interview questions, how to choose a good environment to record an interview, ambient noise, handling noise, pop filters, and a variety of other practical recording tips and tricks.

The initial classes of the workshop focused on looking at other projects that connect story telling and interview with photographs, like the *New York Times* One in 8 Million project, where photographs and recorded interviews are edited together to tell a story of residents of New York City, in an attempt to highlight or get at the essence of New York City as a place. The students were given a variety of exercises to help further their understanding and skill set, based on the examples discussed in the workshops. In particular they were asked to create a plan for their own sound maps including what sonic environment they wanted to communicate, and how they would capture the sonic material and then share it back for a viewer. In addition the classes looked at developing interview questions, understanding how to draw narrative connections between images and sound, and how to tell a story. Initially the

Girls would work together in groups to conduct mock interviews, and to become familiar with the process, the equipment, and hearing their own voices recorded.

The girls were also provided an introductory overview to the Zoom H5 recorders, including hands-on practice with digital recording and editing on Audacity and Logic Pro. We covered skills and techniques as the need for them arose in our critique. For example, while recording a creative response for a photograph of children in school celebrating National Day, one of the interns wanted to layer an interview of a student's memory of her childhood school days spent like the students in the photograph, with the UAE National Anthem in the background. This discussion led to a workshop on layering audio, panning, mixing, and basic automation. Several of the students were also interested in working on film-based creative responses for other aspects of the exhibition, so we also covered basics of sound in film, including importing, syncing, marker creation, and editing in Final Cut Pro and Pro Tools.

The second meeting each week was the critique day, where the girls would share their works in progress. This is where the group developed aesthetic and design choices for the expression of creative narrative. Early on in the process, the girls raised questions about style, language, and length for the digital narratives. Collectively we decided that each digital narrative would be in both Arabic and English, in the first person, and roughly 30 seconds in length.

4.3.2 Critique Sessions

The critique sessions served as an opportunity for the girls to share their work and give their feedback to their peers. It also served as the key moment

during the workshops where I provided input to help shape their creative endeavors. I noticed early on in the workshops that the girls were often more literal than creative in their responses to photographs, for example their initial inclination was often to record a description of what was happening in a photograph. I guided the girls toward a more reflective approach to their response, for example, asking them to record themselves speaking about a memory that was triggered by looking at the photograph, or something that the photograph reminded them of. I also asked the girls to interview members of their family who were either in the photograph, or who remember the period of time or moment when the photograph was taken. My hope was that hearing particularly older-generation members of their family speak about their past, a period of time that the girls could not remember, might help to increase their interest in their own past, and might allow them to see the way others reflect on photographs, to help provide them with some new ideas for their own responses that were not strictly descriptive.

I also used the critique sessions as an opportunity for all of the girls to provide feedback on each other's recordings and creative responses in a way that would provide each with additional information, ideas, and techniques to consider when revising their pieces. Many of the critique days would begin by taping color photocopies of all 82 photographs around the main workshop space. One at a time, the girls would share the recordings they worked on that week, and as a full-group discussion and critique was under way, the girls were encouraged to walk around the room and place comments on post it notes next to the photograph printout we were discussing. (See images 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5) By the end of the critique, each girl had given verbal and written feedback, and the

workshop space was filled with their creative thoughts and ideas. Michele occasionally participated in the critique process as well to give feedback, and at times try and steer the direction of some of their work, to ensure that it was appropriate for the exhibition.¹²



Image 4.6



Image 4.7



Image 4.8 All three of these images capture the workshop process where the interns explored the vernacular photographs, sharing personal reflections about each, and then collectively critiquing the digital narratives in English and Arabic.

During a critique session, one of the interns brought in an interview of her father speaking about his car collection. In it, she was asking him to talk about his favorite car, which was a Thunderbird. He said that he loved having old cars but it was very difficult to find the necessary parts in the region, so he would

¹² After the workshops were over, Michele ultimately took all of the creative sonic responses to be approved by the Foundation before they were allowed to be a part of the exhibit. Despite having pre-vetted the materials during the critiques and creative process, a number of the girls' pieces were not approved, based on the content, and needed to be created again within a very tight timeline. This led to the creation of sound pieces that were lacking in depth and creativity, and in some cases did not provide any interesting information or commentary for the listener. These pieces are among the creative sonic responses currently on display at Warehouse 421, and within the mobile application.

have to travel to the United States to find the parts he needed. We listened as a group to the recordings, and the intern shared her experience of interviewing her father, as well as the challenges she faced. These included the difficulty of finding time in both of their schedules to conduct the interview, being sure to have the audio recorder on hand when the interview was happening, and how the presence of the recorder impacted her father's comfort. The group then weighed in with their thoughts on the recordings, targeted toward both the content, and the fidelity of the recording. This was focused on the quality and perceived distance of the speaker's voice, the signal to noise ratio, the amount of signal or wanted sound in comparison to the noise, or unwanted sound in the recording, i.e., air conditioners, or children playing in the background, and how well the interviewer avoided unwanted handling noise and clipping. The critique usually left the interns with a renewed sense of direction for both revising the narrative and getting a more professional sounding recording.

The girls often worked collectively on a batch of photographs, helping one another develop content and recordings, by brainstorming collective memories about the photographs and what the visual elements reminded them of. In one example, there was a photograph of a boy in a costume against a backdrop; the narrative for the photograph was about the wallpaper on the wall behind the boy in the photograph. Several girls agreed that the photograph reminded them of their childhood, (the late 1980s - early 1990s) when every home seemed to have a very similar pattern and color of wallpaper.



Image 4.9 Family photo of Emirati boy dressed up in uniform

They also shared stories of relatives and family members who lived in other parts of the Arab world, like Egypt and the northern Arab countries, and who had similar wallpaper, and then drew conclusions about how similar materials must have been popular and available in the region at the time.

Associations about time and place became an organic through-line of the narratives and stories the girls recorded. The process of collectively reflecting on a photograph from the past created a space in the present where collective history and culture was celebrated, appreciated, and recognized. As a group of college-aged students who have lived through their country's development from a low-lying city to a skyscraper-filled skyline, they have a strong grasp of the transformation of their nation as it has undergone a lot of change over a short period of time. However, their understanding of their parents and grandparent's

lives and experiences are far less developed, specifically that which existed 20 or 30 years before they were born.

The girls bonded over photographs that allowed them to reach back into their childhood memories of a UAE that no longer exists except in their memories and photograph albums. This photograph of a young boy in a khandora, standing against the backdrop of a wall with an old air-conditioning unit, particularly inspired the girls to connect with one another over shared memories.



Image 4.10 Family photo of an Emirati boy fixing an air conditioner

He is holding the chord of the air conditioner in one hand and what looks like a screwdriver in the other. The girls' initial brainstorm for this photograph was a discussion about their memories of these old-style air conditioners, and how there was one in each room. In a country where temperatures in the summer routinely climb to 115 degrees Fahrenheit, or 46 degrees Celsius, air conditioning is a daily part of life. Almost all accommodations in Abu Dhabi

today have central air conditioning systems, making these stand-alone units obsolete, a thing of the past. They shared memories of how long it had been since they had seen the old-style air conditioner, and how prominent these units had been in their lives growing up. One of the girls recalled an aural memory of the sound of the old units. This memory caused an eruption of joy and a cacophony of laughter and comfort. Each girl shared her memory of the noise that the units made, how loud they were, how they masked other sounds, and on and on. The selected audio recording to partner with this photograph in the exhibition was recorded by one of the interns who still had one of these old units in her family home. The recording begins in relative silence, followed by the clicking of a knob being moved from the off position to a high level of cooling. See the Index of digital attachments for Aircon.wav.

The practice of sharing common experiences and of recalling historical family and cultural references, inspired by objects, places, and styles from one another's photographs, lead to a greater interest in the lives and experiences of their parents and grandparents. Common themes emerged from the family photographs that allowed for groupings to be made. These included but are not limited to birthdays, weddings, international travel, telephones, babies, and studio portraits. These groupings served as the preliminary foundation for the organization of the book, which fueled the organization of the exhibitions.

4.3.3 Digital Media Archiving Tools

In addition to the workshops I also advised Michele on the design of the digital media archive studio that exists within Warehouse 421, as a space where

visitors can come to contribute materials to the archive. The studio is designed to serve several purposes, the first of which is as a high-end documentation environment, where photographs and objects can be scanned, photographed, documented and catalogued while the visitor roams the gallery, after which the materials are returned to them. Given the resistance within the Emirati community to contributing personal family photographs and artifacts to the collection, the studio space is intentionally located within the gallery space in order to encourage contributions from visitors. The studio is convenient for visitors to the space, as they can contribute an oral history or photograph during their visit. The studio was embedded within the gallery with the hopes that after viewing the exhibition visitors would be more inclined to contribute and share with the collection. The studio is also designed to support oral history recording and video documentation, in addition to serving as a workshop and training space.

4.3.4 Exhibition Technology

I worked on the deployment of the Lest We Forget exhibition app, which allows visitors to view media content on their phone or tablet web browser as they walk around the gallery. The app is a source of additional information, and provides the audience with a closer look at photographs, and the opportunity to listen to digital narratives about each photograph in both Arabic and English. The web app was released in conjunction with the exhibition; however, the intention is that it will continue to serve as a digital resource, which can be

accessed via the Internet, for the growing collection and associated materials of creative response.

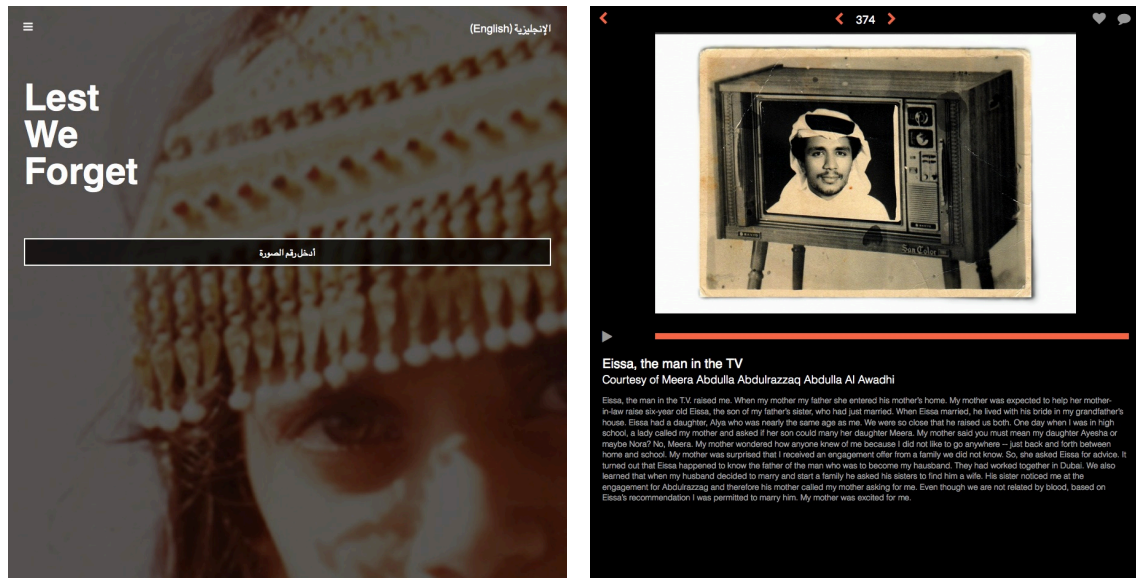


Image 4.11 is the home screen of the mobile application where users can select their preferred language—Arabic or English. (left) Image 4.12 is an example of the page a visitor would navigate to after entering the number of the photograph they'd like to learn more about. The page shows the photograph, provides a written description, and has an audio recording that one can listen to in the selected language (right). The mobile app can be accessed at www.lwfexhibition.ae, and requires the user to enter a photograph number between 1 and 392. The audio files contained within this application are also included on the associated CD-ROM.

I also prepared the Lest We Forget video and audio content for the exhibition, and integrated some of the digital media content with analog devices in the installation spaces. The best example of this was working with a digital video recording, taken by a student on her phone off of a television, and transferring it to a VHS tape that could then be played on a VCR player connected to a very old television that an Emirati family had in their home, then donated to the exhibition.



Image 4.13 This photograph is of an old television set donated by an Emirati family. Playing on loop on the television is an old VHS of the hair toss dance, a traditional Emirati dance performed at weddings and celebrations.

4.3.5 Additional Contributions

As an artist and outsider to the Emirati community it is worth mentioning how my role differs here from the previous case study, and how this difference impacts the development of creative response projects, how they are received, and their impact on the person who is creatively responding.

In this case study, Emirati girls were the artists of creative response, while I served as a mentor to them during the process. This is of course different from the Theyyam case study, where I was an outsider to Keezhara who was creatively responding to cultural material. One important question becomes how different it is to have someone that does not have direct experience with the artifacts, developing creative responses to them? One lesson I learned through the LWF project was how direct personal experience with and memory of artifacts one is responding to complicates the creative response process. The creative responses that result are richer, and have greater capacity to connect

members of a community to their own cultural heritage, as well as perhaps connect outsiders to a community's heritage.

Having distance from the cultural artifacts I was responding to in the Theyyam project meant I was focused on the artistic elements of my creative response. The meaning and cultural relevance of the recordings I made of the festival were a part of the research I conducted in order to creatively respond to the festival.

The Emirati girls who creatively responded to their families' photographs, brought to the process a familiarity with and emotional connection to the people and objects in the photographs. These connections brought an emotional depth to their creative response, and I would argue an important archival value to their creative responses, that could not otherwise be contributed.

The girls' entrenchment in the social values and morays of their community meant that their creative responses were sometimes stifled when creative ideas were in conflict with community values. The creative response process was from the onset, artistically governed by a tacit understanding of conformity to and abidance of Emirati social values. Within the workshops some of the girls expressed ideas and values that deviated from the broader community values and these ideas were incorporated into their creative responses. For these girls, the process of developing creative responses, meant grappling with their community's identity, particularly around tensions between generations. For the girls, the artistic impact of developing creative responses, involved a process of personal introspection where they placed their values in conversation with their peers. As they often worked in groups, the girls would

then participate in the push and pull of defining their individual belief systems in concert with their peers.

4.4 Section Four: Discussion

4.4.1 Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage

Lest We Forget has built its collection through crowdsourcing, an approach that aims to grow its collection through engaging members of the UAE to contribute photographs and artifacts from their family albums and homes. “Crowdsourcing projects are designed to achieve a specific goal through audience participation, even if that goal is as broadly defined as ‘gather information from the public about our collection’” (Ridge, 2014, p. 4). Lest We Forget’s specific goal is to collect photographs and objects of historical and cultural relevance that speak to the development of the United Arab Emirates, from 1950 to present day. The project has several secondary goals that pertain to intergenerational engagement and sharing within the Emirati community. These goals have been explored through a variety of approaches and techniques most of which involve the transformation of content and use of technological tools.

In *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage*, editor Mia Ridge speaks of how participants of crowdsourcing projects often engage in transforming content:

Generally, the tasks performed by the participants in cultural heritage crowdsourcing involve transforming content from one format to another (for example, transcribing text or musical notation), describing artifacts

(through tags, classifications, structured annotations or free text), synthesizing new knowledge, or producing creative artifacts (such as photography or design). (Ridge, 2014, p. 6).

The participants in the Lest We Forget project have largely been involved in the transformation of content that Ridge speaks of. The interns and volunteers for the project have been involved in scanning and tagging donated materials from community members, as well as producing creative artifacts in response to materials of cultural heritage donated to the collection. The LWF project introduces innovative ways of engaging community members in helping to crowd source their cultural heritage.

In particular, LWF has created a group of college-aged ambassadors who solicit participation from the older generations. This approach specifically targets an older demographic of Emirati's, those who are now in their 60s, 70s, and 80s and who were born at least a decade before the unification of the Trucial States. This demographic of the community is difficult to access through traditional outreach and web-based communications, while they are also the generations that have the most comprehensive knowledge and memory of the growth of the nation and the transformation of the Emirati community. By activating these college-aged student ambassadors to gather stories, photographs, and artifacts from their families, specifically their parents and grandparents, LWF is crowdsourcing cultural heritage by way of conducting outreach to the older generations of the community through their younger family members. This approach fosters an intergenerational dialogue that accesses members of the community, artifacts, and memories of cultural heritage that may not otherwise be contributed to the collection.

Defining crowdsourcing is difficult as the practice has taken on differing objectives in a variety of fields, making the data involved very unique and difficult to compare. Though initially mentioned and developed within a business context, crowdsourcing quickly spread to the academic arena, making way for academic crowdsourcing, popularly used in the humanities and sciences, as a means for the creation of large-scale digital resources for raw data (Dunn and Hedges, 2014, p. 232). Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) have become identified as a separate category within humanities crowdsourcing practices, due to the organization being inherently public facing.

Within the GLAM domain there are different crowdsourcing typologies, including simple crowdsourcing games, which were proposed by Mia Ridge. “In this typology, the proposed categories are: Tagging; Debunking (i.e., correcting/reviewing content); Recording a personal story; Linking; Stating preferences; Categorizing; and Creative responses.” The proposed categories pertain to the type of activities a crowd is asked to conduct. The Warehouse 421 exhibition layout in and of itself provides a framework for varied typological approaches to crowdsourcing, through a number of installation based contribution moments, and participatory engagement spaces. One of these is the open space on the main exhibition floor, which engages the audience or “crowd” in games and participatory activities toward contribution. Similar to Ridge’s categorical approach, given above, LWF used categories and collection-based themes, which were derived from the types of photographs that people contributed to the collection, to delineate categories of the book, and resulting exhibition. These categories include “Telephones,” “Travel,” “Motary,” “Eid,” “Sheikh Zayed,” and many more. Two of the main tables in the open area of the

exhibition feature interactive games where users are engaged around the content of the exhibition through these categories.

The first table features a large screen in the center, with four individual screens, one at each corner of the table. The large screen is broken into quadrants, and once the game begins, the screen will show each player a cluster of photographs. Then on their individual screen, the player is prompted to select one category from a list of four that is inclusive of all of the photographs showcased on the main screen. Once each player chooses they will be told if they were correct or incorrect, and their answer will be assigned a certain number of points. When the game is over the player with the highest score wins.

The second table features one large touch screen in the middle of a table, and next to it a moving carousel with different color cards, each sitting within its own slot. The cards are clustered into categories differentiated by colors. For example, cards that specify geographies within the UAE are green, while cards that specify years are yellow. Each card has a title printed on it, for example a decade, like the 1980s or 1990s, or a city like Abu Dhabi or Sharjah. Some of the other cards have titles with categories or metadata that were used in the tagging of the photographic collection, like “work,” “cars,” or “women.” The visitor chooses a card, let’s say “Abu Dhabi,” and places it on the screen, which results in a pile of photographs automatically collected on the screen, which are pulled from those in the collection that have been tagged with “Abu Dhabi” in the metadata. The user can then touch each photograph to pull it out of the pile, enlarge it, or get additional information about it by touching on a letter “i,” in the top right hand corner of the picture, which pops out an information window. The user can take a second card from the carousel, let’s say “women,” and place

that card next to the first on the screen. The resulting pile of photographs will be of women in Abu Dhabi. At present this particular combination will showcase a very small collection of images, as there are very few images that have been donated to the collection of women in Abu Dhabi. This process can be repeated with any number of categories of interest. In addition to being popular among local families who want to see familiar moments in time, the game is often used as an opportunity to showcase where in the collection there are very few photographs, to inspire visitors to contribute from their family albums.

4.4.2 Gender and Representation

There were initially no vocal representations of men or older women in the digital narratives, as the girls were the ones recording the stories. Then the girls decided to record members of their family who were not in their demographic, reading the narratives they had written. There were brothers and cousins and fathers who agreed, while many of the mothers and grandmothers did not choose to participate.

One student was able to get her mother to create a number of recordings for the telephone room. The student and her mother recorded eight or nine conversations that she might have had on the phone with friends, parents, or children. The recordings were unfortunately not accepted by the foundation and were cut from the exhibit. The layers of resistance are complicated and sometimes difficult to understand, as the final say often comes from the Royal Family of the country. This is to say that sometimes when individual members of the community choose to share or participate, their contributions may not be included in the collection, if the ideas or stories they share are deemed

problematic representations of the Emirati culture. By problematic representations, I mean a representation that is contrary to the way the government of the country perceives their identity or history. Within the Lest We Forget project, the decision that something is problematic will come from or with the support of the head of the foundation. If the mother had contributed a photograph of herself on the phone, to the collection, the photograph would be included in the book and the archive.

There were other workshops that the girls participated in as well. There was a wonderful workshop on filmmaking that taught the girls basics of storyboarding, scriptwriting, and camera techniques. Lest We Forget, was approached to participate in the development of a television advertisement for the UAE's 43rd National Day. The girls worked on the piece in the video workshop, where they used archival photographs from National Days past, overlaid with an a cappella recording of them singing the National Anthem of the UAE. (See data file of LWF National Anthem.wav) All of the girls participated in this process, which did not require any visual representation of them, and where they were able to sing as part of a collective voice.

As the project grew there were also members of the royal family who openly contributed photographs of Sheikh Zayed from their family albums, as well as a few of his family, including his son Sheikh Khalifa, the current president and ruler of the UAE. These types of gestures hold great weight within the Emirati community and in many ways pave the way for other members of the community to feel comfortable contributing to the collection and the archive.

4.4.3 Language and Representation

The girls decided it was critical to record an English and Arabic version of their narrative for each photograph, as this would allow them to reach a broader audience. There was also agreement that some of the older generation of Emiratis may not be comfortable with the English recordings, while some of the younger generations of Emiratis may be less comfortable with the Arabic recordings. The process of negotiating how to articulate the same idea in Arabic and English was also a frequent topic of conversation during the workshops. The girls would play back their recording in Arabic and in English, and the group would discuss whether or not there was a symmetry maintained in the meaning of both recordings, and if the way things were expressed in both sounded and felt right. A recording that sounded good in Arabic often did not translate well into English and vice versa. As a result, most of the girls' recordings did not strive for a direct translation from Arabic to English or English to Arabic, but rather they developed two similar narratives that informed one another, and felt appropriate for the two languages. One of the best examples of this comes from photograph 319, of an old man holding a gun while sitting on a *majlis*, a traditional low living room-like seating area for community meetings and entertaining guests. The back of the photograph was inscribed with a poem written on it in Arabic, which translates in English: "I am getting old, my gray hairs are laughing at me. All ships are sailing, only mine isn't. My ship and my lover's ship are loaded with passion. I will dump my load, lest my secret is exposed." The girls decided to read the poem in the Arabic recording, as it sounded poetic, and they felt it captured a historical component that helped to situate the photograph within a time period in which fishing was a form of

livelihood, and hand-writing letters and notes was popular. However, given the way the poem translates in English, the girls felt that the English recording that accompanied the photograph should not include language from the poem and instead they created a narrative that correlated visual elements of the photograph, with emotional elements that were highlighted in the poem. The recording was a sonic description of the man's character and strength.

Even within the internship group, the girls had varying comfort levels with Arabic and English, and within Arabic—with the Emirati dialect of Arabic versus Fusha, Modern Standard Arabic. Many of the girls identified themselves as either more comfortable recording their voice in Arabic or English, and would then partner with someone who was strong in the other language. Some girls were comfortable recording in both languages, but few were comfortable with both Emirati Dialect Arabic and English.

Another negotiation within the group was whether or not they should record the Arabic narratives in Fusha, so that the material was accessible to a wider audience throughout the Arabic-speaking world, or whether they should record the Arabic in the Emirati dialect so that it was more true to their culture and more linguistically accurate to how the thoughts and ideas would be expressed. In the instances where the girls interviewed older family members, the recordings were often in the Emirati dialect. A younger member of the family or a friend of the same sex would record the English versions of these narratives. When recordings in the Emirati dialects were shared with the group during critique, there was strong consensus that the Emirati narratives had a stronger presence and felt more accurately descriptive of the photographs. As a result, the

Arabic narratives in the exhibition alternate between Fusha and the Emirati dialect a form of Khaleeji or Gulf Arabic.

4.4.4 Censorship

I am reluctant within this dissertation to discuss the matter of censorship in too great a depth, in large part due to cultural sensitivity for the UAE Government, the Emirati community, and the LWF project. Having lived in the UAE and worked closely with the project, I have adopted an understanding of the values around private matters, in particular the matter of Emirati identity and citizenship. I am choosing to respect the community by not delving too deeply into some of these divides within the community.

As I will further explore later in this section the matter of Emirati identity is somewhat complicated and sensitive. The Lest We Forget project aims to document and collect vernacular photographs from Emirati families, as well as creative response to these photographs, which requires curatorial decisions regarding how Emirati identity is defined. Whereas one's national identity is often defined by citizenship this criteria is complicated in the UAE, where a person can spend their entire life, from birth, in the UAE and never become a citizen. Additionally I feel that the LWF project is navigating how best to document and preserve Emirati culture that is derived from tribal Bedouin communities native to the desert, from those communities that have more recently (in the last 50 years) become the numeric majority within the UAE, including the Arab, Western European, and North American expatriate communities, in addition to the large migrant labor community from South and

South East Asia that has built much of the countries infrastructure. It is impossible in the UAE to draw clear barriers between groups of people for collections purposes and this, I believe, is at the heart of much of the censorship within the LWF project.

An important layer to this project is a critique on the overall curation of the Lest We Forget Collection and the associated exhibitions, books, and web presence. Michele curates the exhibitions and the book with input from the girls and other collaborators; however, the Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation makes the final decisions about content. The foundation funds and puts their stamp on the project, and as a result, there are aspects of Lest We Forget that have been put forward by Michele and the girls that are augmented or removed before they are seen by the public. These decisions seem to be made about material that is considered to be a representation of Emirati culture that is not supported by the foundation.

The girls, like myself, have learned an immense amount through this project, including ways to engage about family and community history, how the UAE is seen by the outside world, and ways their government participates in sculpting that image. For those students whose families travel internationally often, involvement with LWF offered a new approach to engaging with an international community that is rooted in sharing one's cultural heritage in an international context.

Working within a peer group, the girls learned to navigate the values and parameters of their community, while working within them to creatively work outside of them. Their process of sharing photographs and developing

narratives about those family memories has fostered their process of recognizing how to self-censor, and how to share genuinely, and what that means.

The best illustration of this is a student who was heavily involved in the project, whose late father was Emirati and whose mother is Egyptian. Her mother's story was featured as one of three vignettes in an intergenerational female film installation. The critique of the film by the foundation was that the narrative did not focus enough on her deceased Emirati husband and focused too much on her Egyptian heritage. The film was re-edited so that the narrative of the story focused more on the Emirates and her husband. While neither version of the film was edited by the student, but rather by a professional video team who shot and edited the film, the filming and editing happened in collaboration with LWF. The subjects of the film were not involved in the decision to re-edit the film. When I asked the student how her mother felt about the severely edited second cut, she said her mother was happy that the film focused on her father.

During the exhibition's opening weekend this student was stationed in the screening installation room. While catching up with her, I asked her how she felt about the editing process of her mother's film. She said she had heard about it and felt that it made sense since the exhibition was focused on Emirati culture, and was happy for her father to be brought into it more. She said her mother had seen the installation and cried throughout the film out of sadness for her husband, so she left the exhibition because she didn't want to be seen crying.

The workshops provided a space to discuss those things that are not allowed in the public representations of UAE history. For example, discussions of how, prior to the discovery of oil and unification of the Trucial States, the UAE granted citizenship to a wide variety of expatriates who chose to settle in the

country. Especially because many nuanced experiences are left out of that public history, it is important to give voice and space for that kind of discussion to happen in the collective space, where the girls spoke with one another. One identified outcome of engaging the girls in the process of creative response is that the workshops became a space that legitimized their thoughts and ideas about their relationship to self, to culture, to family, and to community. The workshops were a place where the girls somewhat overcame self-censorship. However, while the girls moved into a place of acceptance of each other's work, ideas, and discussions behind closed doors, these were often masked by more socially acceptable beliefs when the girls were back in the general public.

4.4.5 Creative Response and the Living Archive

Creative reflection was a key tool in the collaboration process with the girls, and it allowed for a different point of access to the community. Whereas working with a more traditional archival approach that favors academic language and content might be off-putting in this context, the conversations that resulted from the creative collaborative process were open and inclusive.

The girls' in these workshops were between 18 and 27 years of age. As a result their point of reference for life and the world around them is rooted in digital media culture. They are technology natives, who look toward their phones, their computers, and other technologies to navigate the world. We are looking at photographs of their parents and grandparents generation dialing rotary telephones and using record players at a time where none of the modern technology of their time existed. The girls are able to interface with the ideas of

antiquity, their family members, and the notion of their history by responding to the photographs using tools and technologies that are familiar and intuitive to them, rather than asking them to connect with things that are antiquated. This is a huge part of engaging their generation. From my unique role as both workshop developer and technology adviser, I could see how engaging a generation around antiquated materials about their own community and family through the use of digital media technologies made the younger generation more interested in those antiquities, and allowed them a different entry point of access to their family and community history and memory.

Michele talks about experiencing pushback from her students when she began the project in her classroom at Zayed University. This resistance came from the students who could not understand why anyone would care about their family photographs and history, or why it mattered. This likely comes from a national mentality of “out with the old and in with the new,” which has stemmed from the rapid growth that has led to the introduction of new devices and comforts with regularity.

As a result, the students of today don’t have a strong sense of why there would be value in photographs or personal histories that help to document this transition and modernization. For example, a family photograph of a student’s parents in an old car in the 1970s in the middle of the desert, where a 50-story skyscraper now sits, did not resonate at first as being of value or interest. Having these students engage with the older generations of their family, and hearing the retelling of the stories behind the images, was the process they began with.

As Michele described it, the turning point came when the girls brought these interviews and stories back to a community of their peers in the classroom.

This was the point where there was noticeable overlap in experience and stories, and where the students began to recognize the similarities in the experiences of their parents' generation. One example that struck me was when the students realized that there were many photos of young men in the 1980s with Afros, in the UAE as well as in photographs that were taken on trips abroad. They pulled out discernable social, cultural, and economic references that revealed themselves through these photographs. I don't think they would have engaged with these archival materials in the same way if they were not engaging with the materials through a process of creative response. These girls conducted interviews with their family members, which became digital narratives, and they juxtaposed archival photographs of buildings in the city with those they had taken in present day, creating a composite of the old photograph and a new photo from the same place.

Ultimately it was the power of communal response as they came together and shared their stories that helped the students realize there was something powerful in their history. Getting to this point was challenging and I would argue greatly facilitated by the fact that they were being asked to explore their own heritage through a process of response that allowed them to engage with archival materials through digital media technologies.

4.4.6 Ethical Responsibility and Collaboration

All of the work that I talk about in this dissertation is tied to communities that are not my own. One of the challenges inherent in trying to partner with a community is figuring out how to do so well. When I lived in India, I worked for

an NGO where I learned that a crucial part of my job was navigating relationships with the community and the individuals within it. In the UAE, the same considerations apply when working on a community based project like Lest We Forget. As a female collaborating with an all-female group, I already had greater access than a male would have. In the beginning I was very much an outsider, but over time, through my work with the girls, we developed a more casual relationship that felt as though it transcended some boundaries.

As an artist and ethnographer, I find myself spending a good deal of time considering the ethical implications of my work. The question of ethical conduct is considered by ethnographers across disciplines, and rightfully considers the role the researcher plays in the transmission and preservation of that which they are researching. Ethical conduct does not come up in the same way or as often within the arts community, though it is raised as a concern. I believe this is in part due to a focus on the discourse on creative license and freedom, which has the aim of protecting artists' ability to engage with subject matter, rather than limiting it.

Work that straddles these two disciplines is therefore lacking a clear set of instructions or method for how to follow the rules while doing the work. In my own creative work I aim to develop material that is respected and understood both within and outside of the academy. I attempt to mediate the challenges raised about cultural appropriation by collaborating with local partners who are creating their own work from my research materials. The work they are creating utilizes my research but is in no way mediated by me.

In my work with Lest We Forget, all of the recordings that were created have been in collaboration with the Emirati interns and Michele. One outcome of

this collaboration was a discussion on how best to build a collection of recorded stories, interviews, and memories for their archive. I recorded interviews with many of the interns, and in some cases their family members, but I did not conduct the interviews. I developed and facilitated the workshops where all recorded material was played, discussed, and revised, and I made suggestions throughout, based on my own experiences and opinions about the material. However the interns were empowered to make decisions about the resulting content and how it is shared back to their community. Not dissimilar to teaching students in a classroom, the collaboration with Lest We Forget was always an exchange of knowledge and information between all parties. I did also share many of my own recordings and creative projects with the interns as a basis of reference and to give them an idea of the type of work I make and in which I am interested.

4.5 Section Five: Conclusion

4.5.1 Activism

Through the process of their involvement in the Lest We Forget Project many of the Emirati girls became activists for the preservation of their family stories. They became the interviewers, the mediators, and in some cases, the storytellers themselves. These girls have helped to tell the soon-to-be-forgotten memories of their grandparents, the reflections from a generation who were born into a Bedouin lifestyle and who are now living in a fast paced, skyscraper-speckled, globalizing, financially thriving, oil-rich country, probably driving a

high-end car, and banking in a national bank. The memories they share are of moments that have occurred throughout these dramatically contrasted worlds, both of which existed on the same land but changed over the course of their lives. Much of the knowledge and history of the Trucial States, and the UAE's history pre-unification, is threatened to be lost when this generation passes on. It is for this reason that the UAE government has begun to support projects like Lest We Forget that are focused on collecting and preserving Cultural Heritage of the UAE. The 2016 Qasr Al Hosn Festival, a large community-based festival with wide reach and engagement from the community, featured screenings of old videos and displays of historic photographs from the government and petrol companies, supported by the National Center for Documentation and Research.

4.5.2 The Archive

One aim of my research is to better understand the outcomes of the development of the creative responses to the archival materials. In particular, this work aims to identify ways in which the development of creative work supports the preservation of key cultural traditions and practices and contributes to the archiving and sustainability of a tradition, by making it relevant in today's rapidly shifting, cosmopolitan, and virtual world.

The oral histories recorded by the Lest We Forget interns are digital artifacts that exist on computers, on websites, in an exhibition; they could even be somebody's ringtone for their phone. And when the person who has that ringtone rides the bus or the metro, and when their phone rings, it is possible that the digital artifact of someone's oral history might become another person's

overheard-on-the-subway story, which they post as a status update to their 300 friends on Facebook, one of whom might share the story with a friend at happy hour, who might write about it in an article or book they are trying to publish. Whether the digital artifact remains in its digital format or becomes translated into an analog format like written text, as in the hypothetical example above, its digital nature supports its movement between the analog and digital worlds, enhancing access and visibility to the material, making it relevant in today's rapidly shifting, cosmopolitan, and virtual world.

The ongoing development of the LWF collection happens in a variety of ways, many of which are grassroots, including development through student contributions in the classroom, by word of mouth, through community discussions and workshops, and by creating opportunities like internships that invite students from the community into the project. These different approaches to building the collection are each important on their own and serve as scaffolding for one another, in that there are organic intersections that are created by these particular collections approaches. For example, students begin to recognize that there is a broader context for their own family history, which occurs through learning about the history of their classmate's families, their grandparents, and their nation. Utilizing digital media techniques and approaches to develop the collection of photographs, including digital image restoration and manipulation, digital audio recording, and digital film production, allowed students to connect with the material and the project more intuitively. Perhaps this is tied to the college-age demographic of the UAE being comprised of digital natives, for whom computers, digital photography, film, and

sonic manipulation are all intuitive forms of expression, and a familiar means of communication.

4.5.3 Preserving Cultural Practices and Traditions

The LWF project is intentionally intergenerational. Initially the Emirati student community that Michele taught was not interested in sharing their stories and family photographs, and through her teaching and collaboration with the girls, four years later these same girls and their families are sharing their photographs and stories in a public exhibition as well as in a book that they are proud of. In this community that prizes privacy, LWF was able to engage people in their 60s and 70s in wanting to share their stories and make public their history. The process of working with the younger generations of students to develop creative responses to photographs became about connecting generations. It was about using creativity as a tool to unpack the privacy related inclinations of her students who did not want to share their family history.

There were also many family stories that were uncovered through recorded interviews. The students would sit with a family member and inquire about a particular photograph and record the resulting conversation, which they would then transcribe. Often students would choose to use edited versions of the recorded interview as a sonic element of the collection. Many students found family photographs of their fathers or brothers camping and hunting in the desert, photographs of birthday celebrations, members of their family with leaders of the country, as well as images of Abu Dhabi before the large development boom.

There were photographs that represented what holidays like Eid looked like within a particular family, and the styles of dressing from different periods of time. These photographs revealed an Abu Dhabi that the students were not alive to witness, but that they learned about through interviews. All of these stories and photographs, unless deemed private by students, were shared with the other students, furthering their collective knowledge about their own city, their country, and their collective cultural history.

Having students collect photographs and stories from their families has proven to be a way for the younger generations to connect with and learn about their family and cultural history. However doing this type of collection work within a group of their peers allows the students to take an ownership and interest over that history, that may not occur by speaking to family members or looking at family photographs. Collectively developing a collection of vernacular photographs brings into the classroom many stories, histories, and questions about a shared cultural, social, geographic and national history that the students then became interested in exploring.

5 Sonic Storyboarding: The Call to Prayer

5. Sonic Storyboard: The Call to Prayer

5.1 Section One: Introduction

5.1.1 Introduction

Sonic Storyboard is a project developed from recordings of the Islamic call to prayer, also known as the *adhan*, *azhan*, or *namaaz*, depending on where you live, from mosques around the world. I am fascinated by and studied religion in college. I was raised Jewish and my father was raised Muslim from a family of East Asian Islamic descent. From my time living in India, I became fascinated by religious recitation: if you look at Hindu wedding songs, Jewish Trope, and Islamic readings from the Qur'an, the sonic cadence seems intuitively similar to me. Yet [Westerners] often think of the Islamic call to prayer as something "other," something foreign, and as singular. I wanted to create a project that showed the nuances among calls to prayer, and to figure out how to share that with people toward the end of helping to break down assumptions of Islam.

The idea for this project was to capture a wide range of adhans from around the world and play them back in interactive environments to help bring greater awareness about the nuance and diversity of the call to prayer. I captured recordings of the call to prayer at mosques in different places, which was fascinating because it meant meeting and talking to people at or around the mosques. Gathering these recordings independently is a time consuming and expensive task, which lead to collaboration with others through crowdsourcing and social media sites, as well as friends and colleagues who were happy to

record the adhan during their travels. I then developed two different creative projects from these recordings.

The first project is a sound map that lives online at www.dianachester.com/audiomap.html. It is a map of the world fueled by Google Maps, with little markers placed where the calls to prayer were recorded. If you click on the markers, you can see a picture of the mosque and listen to the call to prayer. The idea is simple; it geo-locates these adhans and allows people to listen to a call based on geography, from North Carolina to Istanbul, and Tunis to Singapore, the listener can hear the differences between the adhans.

The second project is an exhibition with a completely different aim. The exhibition unintentionally reached an audience who were largely non-Muslims, but who lived in Abu Dhabi and were surrounded by Islam. The demographic makeup of the audience was due in large part to the makeup of the artistic community I was a part of, within the university where I taught in Abu Dhabi, and was also tied to the complexity of the subject matter. This is to say that in a Muslim country like the UAE, it is complicated to have a sonic exhibition which plays the adhan outside of the appropriate prayer times, and which manipulates the adhan. For these reasons the exhibition was more of a private affair, by invitation only and was hosted at a gallery space within a private residence, rather than in a public art space.

The exhibition was reactive in nature, an interactive approach where people's movement in a space caused a reaction from the exhibition. The design of the exhibit used six of the calls to prayer and associated photographs of the mosques, where the recordings were taken. The photographs of the mosques were hung on the wall, and when people moved among the photographs of the

mosques, ultrasonic sensors sensed their movements, triggering changes in the sonic playback of the call to prayer from the corresponding mosque.

5.1.2 The History of the Adhan

In almost every Islamic community today the loudspeaker, radio and television have become essential in the traditional call to prayer, a remarkable juxtaposition of high media technology and conservative religious practice. The loudspeaker simply extended the purpose of the minaret, that towering section of the mosque where the reciter traditionally stood to perform the call to prayer, his voice reaching the surrounding Islamic community.

—Toong Soon Lee (2009)

The Islamic call to prayer is recited five times daily as a way of signifying the prayer times to Muslims. Depending on the individual interpretation, the prayer times can signify when you should pray, or in some cases the time between each call serves as a window when one should pray. The five prayer times span from before the sun rises to after the sun sets, and are dictated by the sun, making the timings different daily. The five prayer times are known as Fajr, the early morning prayer (before sunrise); Dhuhr, the noontime prayer; Asr, the late-afternoon prayer; Maghrib, the after-sunset prayer; and Isha, the late-evening prayer.

Traditionally the call to prayer served as a “soundmark” (Lee, 1999, p. 87), which marked the boundary of a given Islamic community, based on the area over which the muezzin’s voice could be heard. Whereas traditionally the muezzin, or reciter of the adhan, would recite the adhan from the top of the minaret, in modern day the muezzin recites the adhan into a microphone that is broadcast over loudspeakers, affixed to the minarets of the mosque facing

outward, toward the community. In urban contexts, where people may not live or work within earshot of a mosque, people use technological aides to help them keep track of prayer times, like a radio adhan, an adhan alarm clock, or a smart phone app with the call to prayer times for each city around the world.

The adhan is beautiful to listen to, but is not considered song or musical; for Muslims, the Qur'an, or holy book, is not considered music. "Instead the literary and rhythmic qualities of the text are extensions of the inherent quality of the text itself rather than superimposed musical ornamentations." (Sells, 2007, p. 162). This is an important concept to understand, particularly when working with the adhan in a creative capacity. It feels important to respect the parameters of the recitation as dictated by the culture from which it is derived. For this reason I will go into more depth here about the rules and approach to the recitation of the adhan, as described by Michael Sells in *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelation*.

Sells discusses the importance of the recitation of the adhan as "one of the most venerated activities within Islamic culture and civilization." (2007). There are specific rules of recitation that guide muezzins around the world in the way they recite the call to prayer. Though the recitations of the adhan vary by country and individual muezzin, as is evident in the recordings I have taken, there are two basic styles of recitation that are followed by all, the *tartīl* and the *tajwīd*. The *tartīl* is an extremely powerful style, characterized by a steady chant that does not boast many melodic flourishings, while the *tajwīd*, or *tajawwud*, is a highly elaborate style boasting many elaborate vocal extensions and flourishings. (Sells, 2007, p. 163).

The adhan has similar sonic qualities to recitations of other religions like that of the Torah, the Jewish holy text. Recitations of the Torah and adhan both employ explicit reading approaches that govern, how portions of words should be recited, where accenting should lie and for how long syllables should be held. It is for this reason and the shared Semitic origins of the root languages, Hebrew in the case of the Torah and Arabic in the case of the adhan, that we hear similarities in the recitations.

The reading of the Torah is governed by 27 different tropes, or Ta'amei haMikra, translated as the flavor of the reading. Traditionally these tropes were a part of the oral tradition of learning to read the Torah, and in modern day have been translated into written symbols to help learners understand how to recite the words in the Torah. These symbols do not, however, appear in the Torah, and they must be learned and memorized separately.

The rules of recitation for the Qur'an are known as *tajwīd*, the same name as one of the styles of recitation. *Tajwīd* "involves strict standards about when and how to make elisions between words, when and how to draw out certain vowel sounds or make certain sound effects with consonants" (Sells, 2007, p. 162). Despite the specificity of these rules, the sonic representation of the adhan is customized and unique to each muezzin's style and the nuance of contributing cultural factors from each country or community, yet an overall sonic cohesion is maintained across adhans within a given style. *Tajwīd* includes a variety of sound effects, while two are the most commonly used: extension (*madd*), and humming (*ghunna*). *Madd* is an effect that elongates the long vowels at the end of sentences, while *ghunna* creates a nasalized effect with certain combinations of the letters n and m. (Sells, 2007, p. 163). The rules of *Tajwīd*, that I discuss

here, describe a type of expression within Qur'anic recitation that is not easily expressed through traditional musical language. Sells explains this phenomenon in the following way: "the Qur'an shapes sounds into particularly powerful combinations with meaning and feeling to create an effect in which sound and meaning are intertwined" (Ibid, p. 164). I draw on this idea in the Sonic Storyboard project when focusing on the subjective elements of the call to prayer that are difficult to name, but which can be felt and experienced.

5.1.3 The Story Behind the Sonic Storyboard Project

In 2002, while exploring the outskirts of a coastal town on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, I dropped to the ground in fear at the sound of very loud, scratchy words being screamed in Arabic out of a loudspeaker on the top of a nearby building. My mind was racing, and I was terrified, certain that someone had found out I was Jewish. It took me a few minutes to realize that what I was hearing was not directed at me at all. It took me another few years to realize that what I had heard that day was in fact the adhan. It wasn't until 2010, when I was bicycling around Abu Dhabi recording the adhan, that the disturbance and distortion of the recitation through the loudspeaker systems of local mosques triggered my memory of that experience in Sinai, and helped me realize that what I had heard that day was in fact the call to prayer.

My interest in Islam comes from a connection to Islam through my father's family, who are Lipka Tatars. His grandparents immigrated to Brooklyn, New York, in the early 1900s as part of a wave of Tatars who immigrated to the United States, from communities in what is now Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania,

Russia, and Belarus. In 1907 my great grandparent's Tatar community formed the American Mohammadan Society, often referred to as the first mosque in New York City. My grandfather went on to become the president of the society for a period of time, and my father was raised within the community. The mosque still exists today in its original location on Powers Street in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

While my father had connections to the Tatar community and mosque in Brooklyn through his parents, he renounced his interest in his religion, as many members of the Brooklyn Tatar community of his generation also have.¹³

My interest in Islam grew during my time in India, which has the second-largest Muslim population in the world, and truly took grip during the six years I have lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Living and working in the UAE, an Islamic country that is governed by Sharia Law exposed me to varied aspects of Islamic life and culture that I did not experience in India, even while working within Muslim communities. In Abu Dhabi, the adhan sounds five times daily from mosques located at the corner of every main block. The national population, Emiratis, wear traditional Kheleeeji (Gulf) clothing, and though they are reported to comprise only 20% of the overall population of the country, the Islamic expatriate community is quite large, representing pockets of Muslim communities from around the world.

Growing up within Jewish communities in New York, and not having had any association with a Muslim community, I had never heard the call to prayer or

¹³ During a visit to the American Mohammadan Society, with my father, in the summer of 2015, I learned from speaking with Alyssa Ratkewitch, the caretaker of the mosque, that many members of my father's generation disconnected from the Tatar community after they left their parents' homes. While I don't know of any proper studies that look at the relationship between the baby boomer generation and practicing Islam in the United States; it is the case that my father, along with Alyssa's mother and many other relatives and community members from the Tatar community of their generation, stepped out of the religious community. It is also the case that their parents' generation and more recently my generation, the children of the baby boomers, are making their way back to the Tatar community.

been to a mosque, and I had zero familiarity with the Arabic language. Now living and working in the United Arab Emirates, I find myself completely enamored with the call to prayer. I appreciate hearing it sound five times a day from every mosque in the city and find it quite beautiful, a far cry from the perspective I had in 2002.

5.2 Section Two: Storytelling Place and Space

5.2.1 The Story Behind the Sonic Storyboard Project

As an artist I encounter the world first and foremost as a soundscape, a never-ending, always-intersecting, and at times sensually offensive, immersive aural experience. The idea of the Sonic Storyboard came about as a part of my fascination with the exploration of sound through the act of decoupling and then recoupling visual and sonic material through technological mediation. Through this process, visual imagery and field recording are used to immerse the visitor in a multidimensional environment, whereby the strategic placement of visual art and sound installation creates a moment of simultaneously seeing and listening to a story. In a world where we are socialized into the immediate gratification of the television or movie watching experience, the Sonic Storyboard initially offers a decoupling of the visual and sonic experience and ultimately a recoupling that is activated and defined by the user. By asking the viewer/listener to exist in a suspended reality where the visual and the aural tell a story that she must work to understand, one cannot help but participate and in turn engage with the work.

Sonic Storyboard: A Call to Prayer aims to challenge and shake up a visitor's assumptions and perceptions; the piece unfolds through images and sound, exposing the nuanced beauty, complexity and cultural variations of the call to prayer that resonate from all corners of the world. This Sonic Storyboard presents the visitor with the experience of standing in front of, inside of, or down the block from different mosques in cities around the globe. I was interested in how collecting recordings and images of the call to prayer from different mosques, then synthesizing them into a contained sonic environment, could engage listeners to challenge their perception of the call to prayer and spur dialogue around it about what people really hear when they hear the call to prayer.

5.2.2 Sound Mapping

The call to prayer is part of our global soundscape. From New York City to some of the most rural villages in India, it is a constant live, sonic element that shapes the aural landscape of place. This project began through an interest in collecting field recordings and images of the call to prayer in Abu Dhabi, where there is a mosque on practically every corner that sounds the adhan five times each day. I would travel around the city on bicycle and car, capturing sounds from different corners of the city. I began planning my international travel based around mosques I could visit to record the adhan. Initially it was just me traveling with my recording equipment, recording the call, taking photographs, and then coming home. This project expanded by necessity as it became clear

that collaborating with people around the world would allow for an expanded scope and faster growth of the project.

In 2013 I reached out to friends and colleagues from around the world, asking if they would contribute to the project by recording the adhan and taking an accompanying photograph where they lived or when they traveled. People responded to the project with enthusiasm, but to date only a handful of people have submitted recordings. I think this is in part due to the fact that the process of recording the adhan does require a certain level of patience and commitment.

In 2015 I attempted to leverage social media to help grow the project, which I had packaged into a web-based sound map of the call to prayer from around the world. Facebook became the primary platform for sharing the project, linking people to the sound map, and requesting support to grow the collection. This approach was further reaching, and touched many more people, well beyond my grasp, as friends reposted and shared the project with their friends, some even pointedly requesting others to submit recordings. I did receive some recordings from these appeals, and directed a lot of traffic to the website, which I will further discuss in the analytics section of this chapter.

In addition to the development of the sound map, I used the field recordings to compose sonic environments that engage listeners to challenge their perceptions and assumptions of the call to prayer and, by extension, of Islam. As the recordings are all live, the true grit and noise of the field environment is carefully captured in them, including ambient street noise, and sound system distortion from mosques. Like the abruptness of the adhan I heard in the Sinai Peninsula years ago playing over very poor-quality speakers, the quality of the adhan I hear when recording is heavily influenced by the spaces

inside of the mosque where the microphones are placed, and the quality of the amplification system outside the mosque, that carries the adhan to the community. Within the UAE, where I have recorded the greatest number of adhan, the quality can deviate drastically between mosques. It has been my experience that the quality of the amplification in the cities is generally better, in part because the speakers are not as worn from the sand blowing at them due to tall city buildings serving as an obstruction. I have also noticed that older mosques, or temporary mosques seem to have poorer quality amplification systems. One of the grittiest adhans I have recorded, and also one of the most interesting, was from a mosque on the Jebel Al Akhdar Mountain in Oman. (Sound Recording JebelAlAkhdar.wav) The recording of this adhan captures the grit, but may not seem as appealing to a listener, as it did to me listening live. This is in part due to having seen the muezzin walking to the mosque five minutes late, seeing his red and brown stained teeth, likely from daily shisha smoking, and then hearing his very raspy voice recite the adhan, which was projected over crackly speakers.

Each recording is an attempt at capturing the muezzin's voice through the loudspeakers facing away from the mosque and into the community; the experience of being a person walking on the street in that community during the adhan. Each recording captures a sonic fidelity of the place, the amplification system of the mosque, the traffic and street noises of the place, and the perspective of hearing the adhan recited not from within the mosque, or on the television or radio, but from within each individual community setting. Additionally, depending on an individual's familiarity with Islam, variations in the adhan can reveal details about the sect of Islam practiced by the Muezzin and

his associated mosque. Specifically there are variations in the adhans of Shi'ite and Sunni mosques.

To date, the project includes recordings of the adhan taken in Turkey, The United States, Tunisia, Sudan, Israel, Palestine, Oman, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Singapore, and Malaysia. Ultimately, I would like for this project to have a live recording of the adhan taken in as many places around the globe as possible.

5.2.3 Collaborating with Communities Around the World

The only criteria for submitting a field recording of the adhan is that it must be complete, without missing words or phrases. This means that the person recording the adhan must be ready with their recorder turned on before the adhan sounds. The adhan timing changes daily as it is based on the position of the sun. It is necessary to track down the daily prayer times in order to know when to expect the adhan to sound. Additionally, my experience of recording is that because most adhans are recited live by a muezzin at the mosque, though some places like Abu Dhabi have synchronized pre-recorded adhans, the exact timing of the adhan may be slightly different than the listed timing. During a trip to Oman, I was waiting outside a mosque on Jebel Al Akhdar, awaiting the recitation of the adhan. I had my audio recorder running and ready for 10 to 15 minutes and heard nothing. Just as I was prepared to leave, assuming that the adhan would not be recited, I saw the muezzin walking toward the mosque from an adjacent community. He was walking slowly and looked as though he may have just awoken from a mid day nap. A few minutes after entering the mosque I

could hear the familiar click signaling the amplification system being turned on, followed by a clearing of the throat and the recitation of the adhan.

The current workflow for contributing to the sound map entails a person sending me an e-mail with the audio file and a photograph of the mosque from the vantage point of the location where it was recorded. This final necessary step in contributing a recording to the project also poses challenges that may impact the number of contributors, as it requires extra steps, including data gathering from cameras, recorders or other devices, and then sending an e-mail with this media. The ideal workflow would minimize the number of steps a contributor needs to take, seamlessly allowing them to record and upload audio and photographic files directly from their phones to a web-based repository for the sound map. This could be easily accomplished through the development of a smart phone app that would store the recordings and photographs for easy uploading once the device connects to wifi or data service. These files would then be posted to the map, after being checked in by the site administrator.

5.2.4 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this project were different from the other case studies mentioned in this research, for two main reasons. The first is the multi-geographic nature of the fieldwork, which resulted in briefly visiting many communities, but not partnering with any one. The second consideration pertains to the historical sonic intention of the call to prayer as a public soundscape, which was intended to be heard by locals and visitors alike. Because I was not entering any one community deeply, I was aware of how easy

it would have been to be a sound “tourist,” entering places and recording sound without any real understanding of the context in which that sound occurred. I therefore made an effort to talk to people in the community when I could, both to learn from them and also to let them know what I was doing so that It would not disrupt or cause alarm.

During the initial two years of collecting recordings of the adhan, I traveled largely alone to large cities and small towns in the UAE, Oman, Jordan, Singapore, Myanmar, India, and Turkey with my archival standard recording rig. These visits would often last no more than one week, during which I would generally visit each mosque either only once, if I was moving around a country, or several times within the week. The mosques I visited multiple times were generally the ones where I made contacts with the muezzin and members of the local community. In some cases I had the opportunity to speak to the community about the project I was working on, as was the case when recording in Bangalore, India. I was in Bangalore for a week, and I visited the mosque where I wanted to record several hours before the adhan would sound. In that time I spoke to many local shop owners, had tea with them and their families, and they then put me in contact with leaders of the mosque—who had many questions about my recording— and ultimately with the muezzin. I was approached by one leader of the mosque, a man referred to as the Doctor, who was highly educated and fluent in English. He was interested in my project and what I was doing outside the Mosque with the equipment. He was interested in whether or not I was Muslim, where I was from, and why I was interested in this particular mosque. My explanation of my interest in the adhan, my father’s upbringing as Muslim, and the Sonic Storyboard project put him at ease. I later met with the

muezzin of the Mosque and recorded the adhan.

In some communities where my stay was brief and unplanned, particularly in Jordan and Myanmar, my interactions with the local community were brief or in some cases nonexistent, largely dependent on the time of day. In Jordan I stopped and visited a handful of mosques on a drive from Amman to the Dead Sea, none of which were pre-planned. While driving, as it neared prayer time, I would exit the main road and drive around a local community looking for the mosque. I would then setup recording equipment and wait for the adhan. In one instance, ten school children spotted my car and came over to ask me what I was doing. In my minimal Arabic, and their English, we were able to establish the basics, that I was recording the Adhan, and they waited with me through the recording and tried to stay quiet.

In Myanmar I had a very different experience recording the adhan in the capital, Yangon, where I was visiting for one week. I located a mosque near to my accommodation, but it did not sound the adhan during prayer time. I had experienced similar challenges in many places, where not all mosques sound the adhan five times per day, but rather the muezzin recites the adhan unamplified. The mosque I was able to record at was located on a very busy street across from the main market, which attracted visitors and tourists alike. I had visited the area of town the day before to see the market. When I noticed the mosque, I inquired with the street vendors about whether or not the adhan sounded and when. They told me to return the following day and so I did closer to prayer time I was given, with my recorder in hand. I was careful to be more discrete in Yangon, as I was aware that there was a lot of anti-Islamic sentiment in Myanmar, and I did not want to alarm the muslim communities or draw too

much attention to myself.

I walked around the side of the mosque with a small handheld audio recorder. There were two Myanmar men of Bengali descent closing down their street shop adjacent to the side entrance of the mosque. They saw me lingering in the area and I decided to approach them to ask about the adhan timing. They were apprehensive about our conversation at first, and there was a language barrier, which we navigated through a mixture of Bengali/Hindi and Arabic. They asked me if I was Muslim, and where I was from, and I explained that I was visiting from Abu Dhabi, and that my father was raised Muslim. I told them I wanted to record the adhan for a project because it sounds very different in Myanmar than it does in Abu Dhabi. This communication was a little less clarifying for all parties, given the language barrier; however, after our conversation, they supported my recording and explained to other folks who approached them about what I was doing. After I had finished recording, a few children from the community approached me, and I let them listen to themselves being recorded to help demystify the recorder.

The nature of the community I partnered with in this project was different than the other two projects; my community consisted of colleagues, merchants whose shops were near mosques, people I met while on vacation, muezzins and members of small rural communities, children excited to see a foreigner, brothers and sisters of friends, a global community of contributors and visitors to the sound map, and a local community of advisors in the UAE, as well as audience members. This project does not support the traditional investment in a single community one would traditionally see at the heart of ethnographic

research; however, the intention of this work is to focus on one aspect of one religious community, which spans the globe.

The public nature of the adhan has historically served to help define Islamic communities, or the “Muslim Quarter” in heterogeneous cities (Eisenberg, 2013). Related to Lee’s idea of the adhan as a “soundmark,” which defines a community by creating a sonic boundary, the public facing nature of the adhan is integral to its function of being heard. Although mosques broadcast the adhan for all to hear, knowing that it is reaching Muslims and non-Muslims alike, I was concerned about how I might appear and how my presence would be interpreted as I recorded the adhan. Through my experiences recording in different places I have noticed that within cities and countries that are predominantly Muslim, no one has seemed concerned about the nature of the recording. For example, in Abu Dhabi, where surveillance cameras are present on every street corner and the experience of living in the place lead me to believe I should be discreet in public recording, not one person approached me or asked what I was doing. In stark contrast, when I recorded at the mosque in Bangalore, India, a country that has struggled with a marginalized Muslim population since partition in 1947, I didn’t get within 20 feet of the mosque before someone approached me and asked me what I was doing. While one could argue that this experience is more symptomatic of the specific countries I visited than a trend, other scholars, like Andrew Eisenberg (2013), have articulated similar experiences.

Eisenberg shares a story of his own experience recording khutba, the sermon, in Mombasa, Kenya, as a young ethnographer, and writes about how community politics and historical oppression of the Swahili Muslim community

led to suspicion and concern about his actions:

One Friday, early on in my research on Mombasa Old Town's Islamic sound-scape, I set out to make an audio recording of an amplified *khutba* from a window of the flat I had rented in the neighborhood. Though I was trying not to be conspicuous, neither was I attempting to hide what I was doing, naively confident in the knowledge that neither Kenyan law nor my professional ethics dictated that any permission was necessary to record a 'public broadcast'. (p. 200).

Having found out later that his actions had caused suspicion within the community, Eisenberg's response, was similar to my own posed above, as he considers "how [the] act of recording a public broadcast could be seen as threatening." (p. 200). Eisenberg gives a glimpse into the complexities and dynamics of the relationship between Mombasa Old Town's Islamic community and the dominant Christian class, who embody the authority of the Kenyan state. While the recording itself was not inherently problematic, the concern over his recording and presence in the community was that he was possibly a spy, and there was concern in the community for safety in places in Mombasa, and possibly Kenya at large. Keeping this in mind, I tried to talk to people at the mosques and in the surrounding community when I could.

I felt strengthened by the goals of the project and my activist intention to build awareness and break down barriers and assumptions about Islam and about Muslim communities, even those that do not sound the adhan. I felt that the ethical challenges of passing through communities were outweighed by the valuable work of disseminating the adhan and educating people about the beauty and nuance of this sacred, global sound. Though not traditional, this research aims to be in service of Muslim communities, and is conducted with ethical consideration for the people, communities, and culture that it explores.

5.3 Section Three: The Exhibition

5.3.1 The Exhibition

The Sonic Storyboard exhibit is a modality of creative sound work that draws on traditional storyboarding, whereby one creates a visual environment in which distinctive ideas or scenes are identified (often on an index card or piece of paper) in order for the story boarder to easily reorganize or structure the narrative by physically moving the scenes around on a canvas, so as to visually see the reorganization. In the case of Sonic Storyboarding exhibit, the visitors play the role of the mover of the index card, where the index cards are individual recordings of the adhan and the parameters for the playback of those recordings.

For example, in an iteration of the exhibition, the Asr adhan, or mid-afternoon call to prayer from Oman, was included as one of the recordings, along with a photograph of the mosque. A visitor's movement in the space begins to move or transform the call to prayer, and several visitors can simultaneously transform a number of the adhan recordings, creating an overall sonic composition. The photograph that the audience member gravitates toward or away from, the speed in with which they approach the image, and the distance they are from the image are all parameters that alter the resulting sonic storyboard created by their movement.

The exhibition, which took place on May 23, 2014, was held in an apartment gallery space in Abu Dhabi, and was attended by 35 to 40 people. The installation was up for a 24-hour period, with a formal opening at 5 pm. The opening was heavily attended, and it served as an opportunity to provide

information on the objective and process of the project, which was communicated through a 10-minute introduction, which also served as an opportunity to explain and demystify the technology used in the exhibition.

For the exhibition I developed a microcontroller sensor driven data collection system where people's movement in the space changed what was happening to audio playback. This involved using Ping ultrasonic sensors that collected data of people's movement, sending the data into an Arduino Uno microcontroller, which would then send the data into a computer that would process that data through several programs I built, which output the pre-recorded adhans with transformations (Image 5.1). The arduino microcontroller and cabling were visible and obvious to the audience in a way that was aesthetically integrated into the exhibition, rather than masked (Image 5.2). Having the technology out in the open, the mess of cables, solder joints, and microcontrollers was intended to fuel discussions of the technology as a part of the installation. People were free to roam in and out of the main exhibit room and into a hallway with drinks and snacks. The casual nature of the opening also allowed for conversation and feedback on the piece, as well as an opportunity for me to capture sonic feedback from the exhibit, in the form of ambisonic recordings taken within the exhibition while people were roaming around.

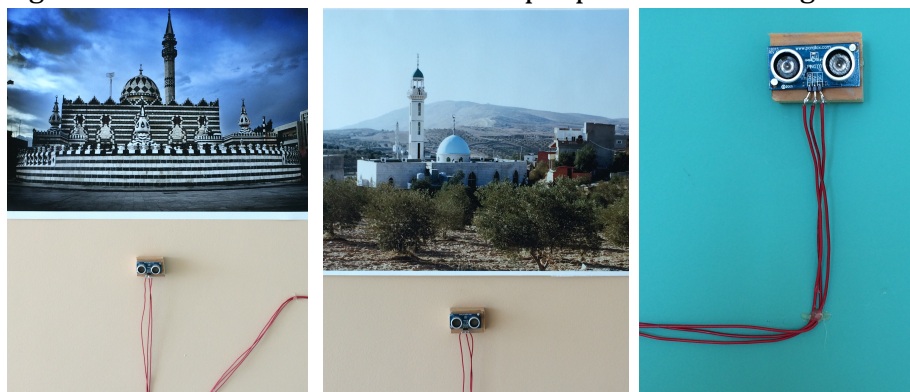


Image 5.1 Ping Ultrasonic sensory with cabling on exhibition wall below photographs of mosques.



Image 5.2 Gallery space show empty with exposed wiring.

5.3.2 Technology

The field recordings of the adhan were mostly recorded using the same equipment, which I packaged into a travel recording kit that was easy to transport throughout my travels. The kit includes a battery operated field recorder, a stereo capsule microphone, a shock-mount, cabling, and headphones all in one briefcase size travel case. I used a Sound Devices 702t field recorder in conjunction with an Audio Technica AT8022 stereo capsule microphone for the majority of the recordings of the call to prayer.

The technology behind the exhibition was built in Arduino and Max/MSP. The Arduino program was able to take information from the ultrasonic sensors around the gallery and map them to a specific data value that could be interpreted by Max/MSP, which I used to control the audio output of the exhibition (Data index file `Sonic_Storyboard_four_sensor_sketch.ino`). The Max

patch I designed takes the data sets from the Arduino sketch, to set parameters that correlate to the extent to which a particular parameter was applied to the audio playback of the various adhans (Data index file sonicstoryboard.maxpat). This was realized through mapping the data range returned by the ping sensors to augmentation parameters within the max patch that would effect various aspects of the recorded audio file. The patch also sent the audio out of the computer to a sound card, which was tied to a quadriphonic speaker configuration. As you can see in Image 5.3, the visual interface for the max patch contains four faders that allowed me to control the overall decibel output of each track.

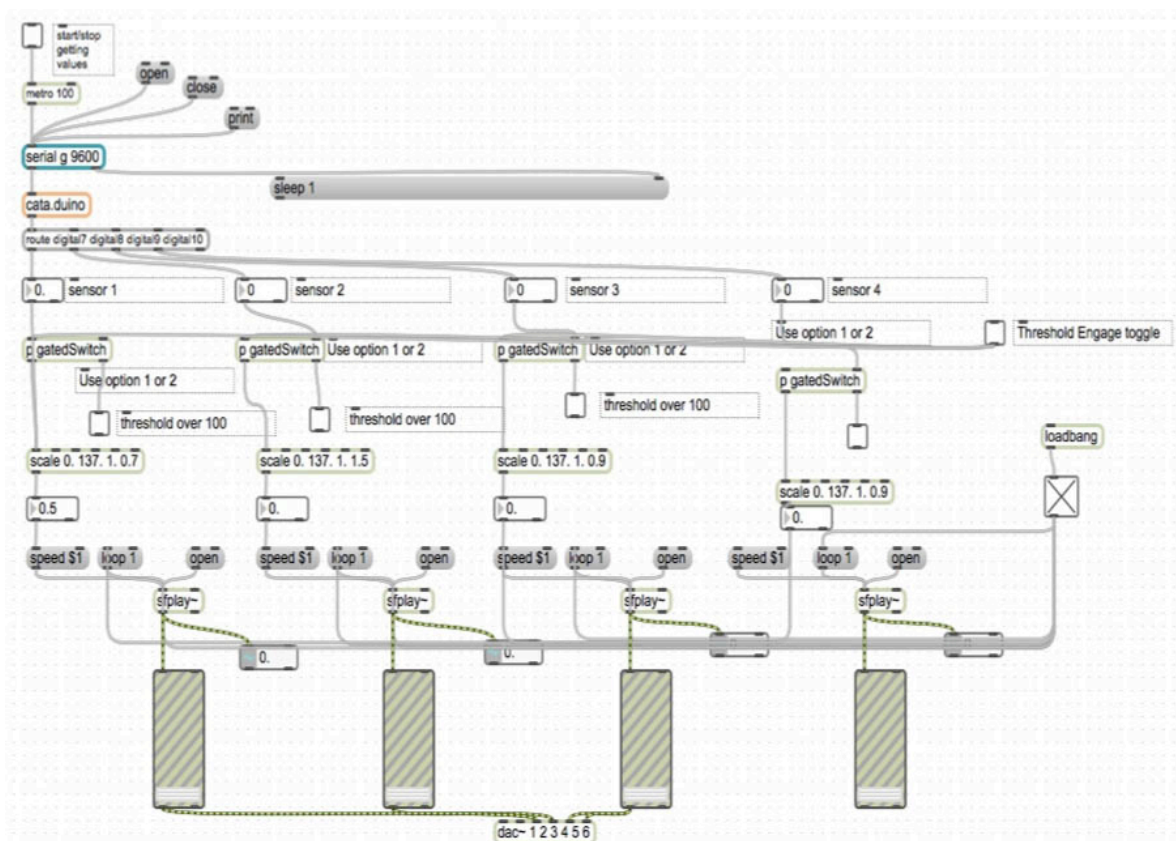


Image 5.3 Screen shot of the Max/MSP maxpatch I built for the exhibition. Program is on the CD-Rom.

The visitor's physical movement in the space altered and augmented different parameters of the audio playback of the adhan. The max patch was

designed so that one's movement nearer or further away from the ultrasonic sensor would augment one of a number of pre-determined parameters of the recording including tempo, amplitude, or frequency. The intention behind these augmentations was that they created an obvious enough change to the recordings of the adhan that they would be noticed. Additionally I was very interested in the audience eventually realizing how their movements impacted what they were hearing. This seemed to happen most effectively when there were only one or two people in the space, as the relationship between one's movement and variation in what they heard was more tangible, and distinctive. While my initial intention was to showcase the nuance and variation of the adhan, which happened only when a visitor triggered a sensor and then left the gallery, the exhibit ultimately drew greater attention to the relationship between the listener and what was being heard. Specifically the exhibit made clear the way one's movement in the gallery impacted the resulting sound.

5.3.3 Ambisonic Recording

I used the Core Sound Tetramic, an ambisonic microphone, to capture recordings of the installation. Many of the recordings included human interaction, conversation, and footsteps, while in one of the recordings I attempted to capture minimal human sounds. (Data index file Sonic Storyboard Exhibition Recording.aif) Ambisonics is sometimes referred to as 3-D sound recording, because an ambisonic microphone is designed to capture the three dimensional soundfield. Ambisonic microphones are built with 4 cardioid capsules in a tetrahedron configuration, one of which has an omnidirectional pattern, while the other three provide directional information. Ambisonic

microphones record in A-Format, but before one can listen to them they must be decoded into B-Format, using an algorithm that encodes the information from a 3 dimensional soundfield into four channels called W, X, Y, Z (Hollerweger, 2008).

A-Format recordings, or ambisonic encoded signals are not directly feeding any speakers, but rather the format is carrying information for an entire soundfield. In order to listen back to an ambisonic recording it is necessary to decode the encoded file into B-Format. It is within the encoding process that the real benefit of ambisonic recording becomes apparent. Ambisonic decoding software allows for the selection of a playback layout for the recording, for example periphonic, quadrophonic, 5.1, or 7.1. The decoding software also supports manual manipulation of a variety of parameters of the recorded soundfield, including the gain, directivity, azimuth, elevation, and width.

Recording with an ambisonic microphone has many advantages, in that it allows the user to decode the soundfield information into a wide variety of configurations to meet their needs. It is for example possible to apply a filter to the recording that makes it sound as though the sound source is above or below, behind or in front of the microphone. The decoding software also supports exploration and trial within the spatialized sound environment allowing users to achieve sounds that may have been impossible to otherwise record. The decoding software is also visual, providing colors and polar pattern shapes for each microphone orientation in the soundfield, allowing for visual spatialized mixing to occur.

Despite these benefits there are also a number of deterrents to using ambisonic microphones, namely cost and the complexity. Core Sound's Tetramic

can be purchased for \$1,000.00 USD, and is one of the lower-cost ambisonic microphones. While some large and small diaphragm condenser microphones can cost this much or more, it is also possible to purchase a much less expensive microphone that will make a good quality recording. The workflow for ambisonic microphones can be difficult, particularly the decoding process. While recording with the microphone is fairly straightforward as I previously mentioned, it is not possible to directly listen to the A-Format recording, which means a user must first decode their recording before passing it through a plugin, where they can pick the speaker configuration and manipulate soundfield parameters. At present this process can be clunky, the decoding software can be buggy and not compatible with all DAW's and until a good workflow is established, will take significantly more time than simply importing a .WAV or .AIFF file into Pro Tools.

5.3.4 Arduino and Max/MSP

The parameters of the Max patch were to augment certain parameters of the playback audio, so that when a person would approach the photograph, which had the ultrasonic sensor underneath it, the audio would be affected. The ultrasonic sensor would register nearer to the 1 end of the spectrum when a person was right next to it, and closer to a 137 when the person was across the room. I then mapped that range, 1-137, or in some cases a portion of that range, to a parameter of the audio that I wanted to change, such as frequency or velocity, or even in some cases, playing the track backwards. This would make the audio of the adhan sound retracted or distorted; sometimes it would feel as

though the track was slowed down or the pitch was deeper. In other cases, the parameters would speed up or slow down the track. It was people's movement in the space that impacted what happened; if people did not enter the exhibition, it would be a space playing the call to prayer as it was recorded. The exhibit helped draw a connection between the presence of a person in a space and what that person hears. All people hear things differently dependent on our experience and references, as was the case with my experience of being scared hearing the adhan while visiting the Sinai Peninsula. Drawing a direct connection between our interactions with the photographs of mosques and the resulting manipulations of the adhan were intended to challenge people to consider how what we bring with us, how we move and act impacts how we experience that place, or what we hear.

5.3.5 Interactivity, Reactivity, and Participation

The adhan is a Qur'anic recitation that demands participatory listening from Muslims (Eisenberg, 2013, p. 192). Listening to the adhan triggers practices of "reception" that are learned by followers of the faith. These practices of reception are interactive at their core, not unlike the participation asked of visitors to the Sonic Storyboard exhibition. In "Islam, Sound and Space: Acoustemology and Muslim Citizenship on the Kenyan Coast," Andrew Eisenberg talks about this participatory practice in a Swahili Muslim community in Mombasa, Kenya:

Proper audition of the *adhan* implies an active process engaging not only the ears but also the entire body, including the voice. Upon hearing the

first line, pious Muslims repeat the first words '*Allahu Akbar*' (God is Great) quietly to themselves, alongside with other prescribed responses to subsequent lines. (p. 192).

Eisenberg goes on to mention other forms of participatory listening in Islam, including the silencing of televisions and radios to make space for the adhan, and habituated bodily techniques mostly in response to sermons (Ibid). The use of interactive media technology in the Sonic Storyboard project allows for opportunities to incorporate aspects of the adhan and people's participation with it, into an exhibition targeting non-Muslims who are not familiar with the practices of reception. This mixing of participatory listening, with reactivity mediated by technology, is an important element of the exhibit that runs beneath the surface, but which brings critical elements of listening and participation to the visitors' experience.

Interactive technology was critical in staging this type of exhibition because of the endless possibilities for expression and connection made available through the combination of physical computing and software development. To give you a sense of how interactive technology can function to connect people and their experiences within an exhibit, consider the following example. Picture a room that is 12 feet long, and one end of the room, against the wall there is an electric piano. On the other end of the room there is a single handprint four feet up the wall. In order to get sound from the piano, a person must be touching the keys on the piano and the handprint across the room at the same time. Now imagine that two or three additional people enter the room, and they form a human chain from one end to the other by holding hands. The first person has one hand on the piano keys, and with the other holds the hand of the

next person in the chain, and this continues until the last person in the chain reaches the wall, and places their free hand on the handprint, after which the depressed notes on the piano are amplified. The process of developing experimental art using technological tools that are mediated by human interaction is at the heart of Interactive Media Technology. Interactive media provides a wide-open arena in which to create, and challenges an artist to be more innovative and experimental in their creations, by blowing open the relationship between the numeric world of computing and the physical world around us.

One aim of the Sonic Storyboard exhibition was for the audience to understand and realize how their interaction or reaction as it really was, with the photographs (and sensors placed below each photograph) impacted the sounds they were hearing. While some audience members seemed to understand this relationship, others did not. This was due to the design of the exhibition, which could have been improved upon. As a result of the size of the space, and the number of visitors to the space, the gallery space quickly became engulfed in a cacophony of sound, and because there were so many people in the space, it was not necessarily clear how one's movement directly impacted the audible environment. The design of this exhibition definitely worked better when there was a one-to-one relationship between audience member and ultrasonic sensor. In a standard exhibition, it is often the curator who thinks through how the audience will engage and interact with the art. In this case, part of the design of the work is anticipating how people interact with the exhibition, but this is difficult to determine, and requires a good deal of experience in interactive design to master.

5.3.6 Analytics

In order to capture data about the web based sound map, including who accesses it, from where in the world, and how often, I added Google Analytics a type of customized filter, to my website. The aim of the Sonic Storyboard is to bring awareness to the nuance of the call to prayer, and by extension, to disrupt assumptions of Islam and to bring awareness of the adhan from different places around the world. Here I will discuss some of the analytics data from the site as well as my observations and conclusions based on the data.

One aim of this project was to help create a repository of recordings of the adhan from mosques around the world. All of the projects discussed in this dissertation aim to ensure that some form of the recorded material makes its way back to the communities from where it was recorded, and for this project the sound map serves that purpose as well. The field recordings associated with the Sonic Storyboard were recorded by people from different places, and taken of mosques around the world. As a result, returning recordings of the adhan to each community poses several challenges. The web presence of the sound map aims to mitigate some of those challenges by making the recordings openly available to any who have access to the Internet. The challenge inherent in this approach is that it is difficult to know if the recordings posted on the sound map are being accessed at all, if so by whom, and with what frequency.

In order to attempt to answer some of these questions I added Google Analytics to my website, www.dianachester.com, and ran several site usage queries. The website is comprised of four main pages, accessible via icon navigation at the top of the page. These are the about page, the projects page, the

music page, and the photos page. The home page of the site, www.dianachester.com is easily accessible via a search engine, but is not easily accessible within the site, except via a small “home” icon in the bottom left footer of the page.

Google Analytics provides a free robust overview of the usage of a given website, giving the owner an opportunity to gain critical data about the site through a highly customizable dashboard. Some of the tools that are offered, which I will focus on in this section, include: data on the number of users that visit the site, the order in which those users access the different pages of the site, the timeframe of the visit, and access and usage based on geography. The analytics tool also allows site administrators to set customized parameters and goals based on their needs and interests. Note that the sound map, which is the main focus of enquiry here, is embedded on the projects page of the website, and as a result the analytics for this page apply to all projects represented on the project page, and not the sound map alone.

Between August 18, 2015 and December 18, 2105, there were 840 discrete sessions during which my website was accessed. Of those 840 sessions, the projects page of the site was accessed during 113. We can see in Image 5.4 below the geographies in the world from where people accessed the projects page of the site from August 18, 2015, to December 18, 2015. These dates were chosen as they represent a quarterly look back from the moment I penned this section, and can be run regularly for the most up to date results.

I created a segment in Google Analytics to search specifically for those sessions where users accessed the projects page. The search yielded 113 discrete sessions, the majority of which originated in the United Arab Emirates. Of these

113 sessions, the geographic breakdown by country is as follows; 64 were from the United Arab Emirates, 21 from the United States, 15 from India, five from New Zealand, three from Portugal, two from South Africa, one from the Netherlands, one from Singapore, and one from Taiwan.

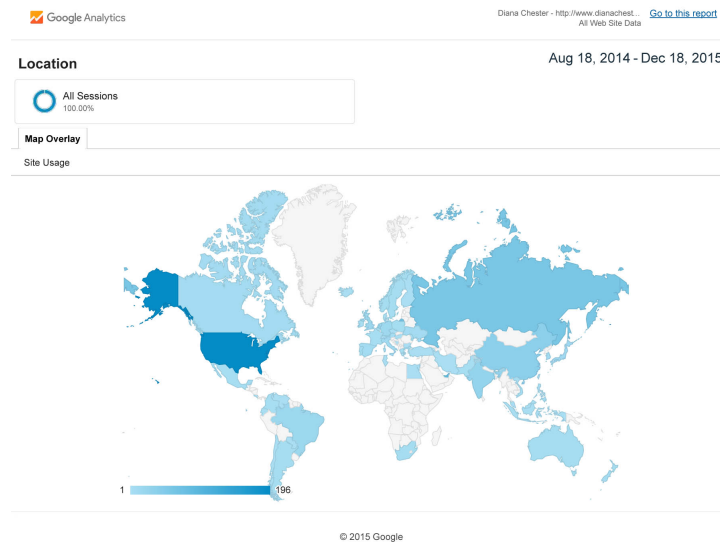


Image 5.4 Map showing from where the sound map was accessed between August 18th, 2014 and December 18th, 2015.

This user data breakdown by country is useful in understanding the relationship between countries where the adhan was recorded and countries where users accessed the website. Of the nine countries where users accessed the website, four of those countries, the USA, UAE, India, and Singapore, were also places where adhans were recorded and represented on the sound map. This of course means that there were users from five countries, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Netherlands, and Taiwan where users accessed the projects page, but are not geographically correlated to the material on the sound map.

Of the 113 sessions, 71 accessed the projects page as their starting page, meaning the first time they accessed the website they went directly to the URL, www.dianachester.com/projects.html. The geographic breakdown by city, of

these 71 users are as follows; 42 from Abu Dhabi, 10 from New York, 6 from Pune, 5 from Auckland, 2 from Cape Town, 1 from Burlington, 1 from New Delhi, 1 from Round Rock, 1 from Singapore, 1 from Voorburg, and one was identified as (not set). Image 5.5 shows the geographic origins of the people who accessed the projects page as their first hit on the site within the given time frame.

Google Analytics has a function that shows when during a visit to the site, a given user accessed the projects page, by charting out the order that pages were accessed. To do so, Analytics uses the following designations: starting pages, first interaction, second interaction, third interaction, and so on. This data is useful in understanding if people visiting the site were there specifically to see something on the projects page. In order to interpret this data I will make the following speculations: Users who directly accessed the projects page were doing so from a link that was shared with them, found through a social networking site, or which they found through a search engine. Users who accessed the projects page in their 1st interaction were likely also visiting the site specifically to view a project, and likely searched for the URL of the home page, either via a link or again through a search engine, and then navigated directly to the projects page. Users who accessed the projects page in their second interaction or beyond, were likely visiting the site for a purpose other than the projects page, but within their search saw the projects page, and therefore likely saw the sound map.

Users Flow



Image 5.5 visual graph showing countries from where users accessed the projects page of my website between August 18, 2014 and December 18th 2015.

Given that there is no good way to determine whether or not a user was specifically targeting the sound map, this data is not a good gauge of determining interest in the sound map. However, this data is important in understanding the users who have likely seen the sound map, as it is visible once a user enters the project page. Seventy-one users accessed the projects page as their starting page, meaning they navigated directly to the project page from a link or a post, or via a search engine. Twenty-seven users accessed the projects page through their first interaction, 14 users accessed the projects page on the second interaction, 13 on the third interaction, 5 on the fourth interaction, and 4 on the fifth interaction. Of the 71 users who accessed the projects page as their starting page, 11 accessed the page a second time within their first four interactions with the site. Working from the assumptions stated above, this would mean that 98

users accessed the website specifically to visit the projects page of the site, while 36 users visited the site for other reasons. The Analytics flow chart of user interaction is show below.

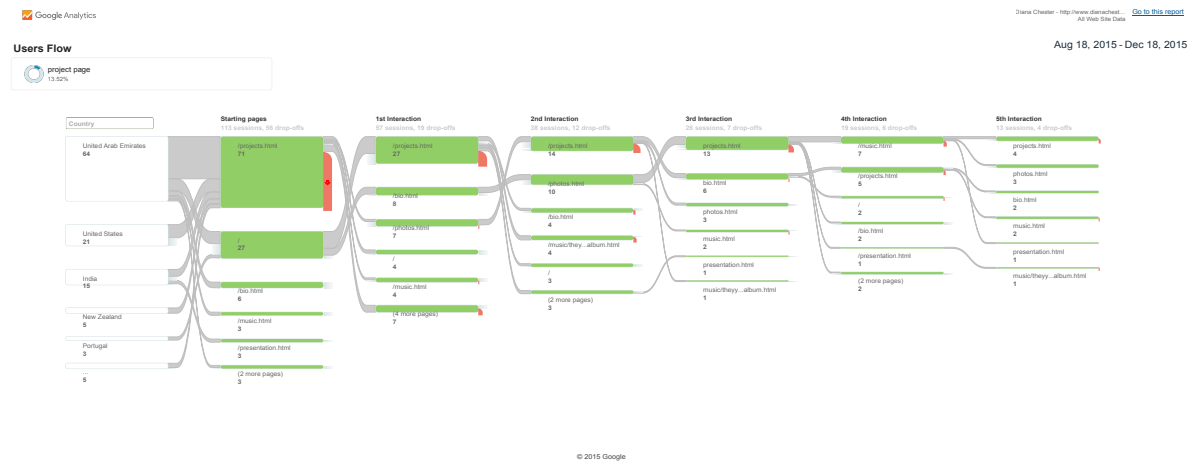


Image 5.6 Map showing moments of interaction with the website when users accessed the projects page, between August 18, 2014 – December 18, 2015.

Google Analytics can also highlight user behavior based on where a user navigated to a site from. This information is useful in understanding the effectiveness of using social networking, in this case Facebook, to raise awareness of and solicit contributions to the sound map. Analytics has a query function that searches for the number of sessions that were directly accessed from a link to the website on a social media post. Using the same timeline parameters from above, the data shows that 8 users accessed the site via Facebook in the four-month period. The announcement about the project with a link to the projects page was posted on September 8, 2014, and there is no spike in access to the projects page correlated with that period. It seems that the posting on Facebook did not have a large impact on raising awareness of the projects site, or to contributions to the site. Though 8 users did access the site via Facebook within the period when the announcement was posted, the

numbers are very low, and it likely did not raise much awareness and access to the site in the ways I had hoped.

The challenge moving forward is how to increase the numbers of people who access the sound map. Based on the data collected above from Google Analytics I have developed several conclusions regarding creating better access to the map, and how to collect more accurate data about visitors to the site. First it will be important to decouple the sound map from the projects page of the website and place it on its own self-standing site. Moving the location of the sound map to its own webpage means that Google Analytics can be applied directly to that page, allowing for better data collection on the ways the sound map is accessed, from where, and with what frequency. Relocating the sound map to its own page will also remove any possible navigation challenges in accessing the map, as the site will be directly accessible, meaning the home page is the map, and a link can be provided that guides people directly to the map, whereas at present users must access the projects page and then click on the sound map icon to launch the embedded map. Additionally, once the site is standalone it will be very easy to run targeted tests that aim to determine how best to guide people to the site. This would entail making announcements about the sound map in as many places as possible, including Facebook, through search engines, via other blogs and websites, and then running analytics to determine if people are accessing the site via the announcements on other pages, providing feedback on the best way to get the site to the public.

Another very important aspect of this project is asking people from around the world to contribute recordings to the map. The project has received very few contributions from the general public, which I believe is in large part

due to the fact that the current process for contributing is complicated. In order to grow the project I would like to make the process of contributing recordings and photographs more streamlined by adding direct record and upload functions to the mobile version of the new proposed sound map site, and in the future to a possible sound map application for smartphones.

5.3.7 Limitations

Working in the realm of interactive media led to many unintended outcomes in this project, including exaggerated simultaneous transformations of multiple adhans due to high volume in the exhibition, minimal quiet time within the exhibit for people to reset their aural palette, and few instances of the non-transformed playback of the adhan. Additionally, the design and implementation of the exhibition posed challenges tied to content as well as technology.

While reworking this project for future exhibitions I would change a variety of parameters in the design in order to mitigate these unintended outcomes, most of which would pertain to the programming within the Max patch that controls the audio transformations and playback. In order to prevent the playback of the adhan from being so overly exaggerated, due in large part to all sensors being triggered simultaneously, I would consider adding a function where each adhan would playback without transformation at least one time in every six repetitions of playback. Given that there were six adhans incorporated into the exhibition, this would mean that within the first six times each adhan was triggered to play back, one of those six adhans would play without transformation, ideally creating a sonic environment where there was always

one adhan playing back without transformation. This would allow the audience to gain a better sense of the raw recording, which would provide important perspective on the sonic deviation that was created through their movement in the space.

In order to meet this same objective of orienting the listener to the extent of the transformation, as well as the variation created by their movements, I would reconfigure the max patch to play back the beginning 15 seconds of each adhan without transformation so that the listener could orient themselves to the recording and then hear the way their movement impacted the recording. This of course would pose a challenge in maintaining the audience's connection to their own participation in augmenting the audio, in that for the first 15 seconds their movement would not create any change, which could cause confusion. Finally, in order to accomplish more moments of silence or empty space in the soundscape, I would create a function in the program that kept track of the playback time that had elapsed, and then insert somewhere between 30 seconds and one minute of space before any one adhan would repeat playback.

One critical element to listening to the adhan is to hear it in the natural sonic environment of everyday life surrounding the mosque where each recording was made. All of the recordings of the adhan consider and capture these local environments that include traffic, people talking, merchants, and the like. However, while listening to the adhan in context, live, the natural environmental soundscape is only peppered by the adhan, rather than being a constant cyclical playback in the way it has manifested in this exhibition. One element of the listening experience that was inadvertently omitted from this project was providing listeners with a true to form listening environment, in

which the adhan is only a peppering of the soundscape several times a day. In order to accomplish the aim of the exhibition, the adhan sounds often in the gallery space, not simply five times per day; however, it is important to provide space within the soundscape created in the gallery, as that openness in the soundscape allows for a type of listening that a constant sonic presence does not. Within each 30-minute cycle of the exhibit I would create several minutes of silence where no adhan would sound, providing the listeners with a break in sonic stimuli that feels critical to the experience of hearing the adhan.

The sensitive nature of the adhan as a religious recitation created challenges in the process of setting up the exhibition. In Abu Dhabi, prayer time is marked by the recitation of the adhan in all spaces across the city. While in a shopping mall or restaurant during the call to prayer, the music is turned off and there is silence, or in some places the adhan is played out loud indoors. In preparing this exhibition I was concerned with how best to situate the exhibit as to not offend or upset members within my local community. Finding the appropriate space was the main consideration. Given the subject matter of the installation it was not appropriate for the exhibit to be outdoors, or open to the public, in particular because the exhibit played the call to prayer outside of the actual call times, and because of the transformative elements in the playback. For these reasons, I decided to hold the exhibition in a private home, a pop-up gallery of sorts, held in a vacant apartment that a friend was days away from leaving. The apartment was located strategically in downtown Abu Dhabi, in a very Emirati community.

One down side of holding the exhibition in a pop-up gallery apartment was that the space was not treated or prepared for this type of installation, and

as a result there were many sonic reflections in the space further contributing to the echoing cacophony. While the exhibition was not negatively impacted by these reflections, the ambiance of people's side conversations did cause some challenges to capturing the effect within the space during the opening. People were having regular conversations in the space, which made it difficult to capture a recording of the exhibition in context without significant sonic disturbance. I ultimately asked a group of visitors to quietly walk through the installation for me to record it.

Once the ambisonic recording was made, I had to learn the ambisonic audio workflow, which having never done it before proved quite difficult. The first challenge was properly configuring a workstation for the ambisonic recordings that had the required plugins installed and working with my DAW. Once the workstation was configured properly, decisions needed to be made about the best DAW for the ambisonic composition and editing process. Ultimately I ended up using different tools to re-encode, edit, and compose.

5.4 Section Four: Conclusion

5.4.1 Conclusion

One aim of the exhibition was for audience members' experiences to be jarring, and for the exhibit to impact their aural sense of place. The targeted audience was comprised of expats who live in a place that sounds the call to prayer. This target audience brought with them the experience of being outsider-insiders to the Arab world and the call to prayer. While most of the audience had not grown up within Islam or a community where the call to prayer

sounded, making them outsiders to the experience, they all were at the time of the exhibition living in Abu Dhabi, which also made them insiders to the city, and therefore familiar with hearing the adhan daily in Abu Dhabi. This outsider-insider designation is significant because of the perspective it gives the audience in being able to hear things that others might not. The audience to the exhibition were likely familiar with the adhan and able to hear it as a familiar sound, not threatening or jarring, without judgment that might be associated with the adhan in certain places around the world. Additionally, the audience members were largely not themselves Muslim, allowing them to hear the transformations to the adhan, while not experiencing the transformations as augmentations of their holy text or as offensive.

As mentioned previously, in Islam, like some other religious traditions, the recitation of the Qur'an or the call to prayer is not considered musical; in fact, it is considered problematic to speak of these traditions as musical. It was risky to develop a project that essentially re-composes recordings of the adhan, or within the context of the exhibition for human beings and their movement to become the drivers in re-composing these field recordings, so I wanted my audience to be those who would be open to hearing an augmented call to prayer.

These expatriates knew what the call sounded like perhaps even to the extent that they were numb to the sound, meaning it was a familiar and common soundscape to them. The idea of the exhibition was to put that target group into a familiar soundscape environment that is augmented, and to connect that augmentation to their movement. The hope was that this would create awareness in the audience of the way their interaction with the space was

changing the sounds they were hearing, to call attention to the subjective nature of hearing.

We tend to choose what we pay attention to. Even if we live in an environment surrounded by a daily soundscape, it is a choice to listen carefully or pay attention to the sounds. I wanted, with this exhibit, to provoke a nuanced understanding of sounds people have become accustomed to. While we may know something about the sounds we hear regularly, there is much we don't know, especially about the sounds we take for granted. We may not know much about a sound beyond its sonic qualities, which may blend into the backdrop of the soundscape of our lives. If we take the example of a person who lives in a large city like New York, it is likely that the person hears sirens in the background of their city soundscape constantly; however, they may not be able to clearly identify when a siren is for an ambulance or a police car, or a fire truck. And because they hear the sound often, they might no longer register that the sound signifies that someone is hurt or dying—in other words, that there is a specific human experience on the other end of that sound that is a call for empathy.

This exhibition relied on a varied changing dynamic. Each time a person was in the space, what they heard changed as their presence and movement changed the outcome of the sonic elements of the exhibition. In other words, the people in the space changed the resulting soundscape of the space. The aim of the exhibition was to place people in an environment where their common inattentive hearing practices were disrupted by their interaction. In effect, this exhibition attempted to train people to listen in a more attentive and focused way. It is possible for us to learn how to differentiate between different sounds

we might take for granted; however in order to do so, we need to engage in a listening study and choose to focus on what we hear.

This exhibition had many unintended outcomes, both on an artistic level, as well as with regard to audience experience. While the exhibition intended to focus people's listening on the sonic nuance of the call to prayer, the sound map seemed to accomplish this much more effectively than the exhibition. I could imagine future iterations of the exhibition where lessons learned from the first exhibition would allow for the intended outcomes to be better accomplished. I have ideas for a variety of different ways of presenting the material, especially around the use of physical engagement with maps, and video mapping tools to create physical presence of place. One such idea would be to make a large map of the world that would live on the floor, which people could touch and walk on. This map would have embedded pressure sensors under each place where the sound map has a recording of the adhan. Stepping on that place would allow the person to trigger the call to prayer. Stepping on it a second time would allow them to stop the playback. The floor map, would allow people to engage with the world, physically, the relationship between countries, through distance walked, awareness of bodies of water, in blue, continents, and places. The map would provide visitors an opportunity to correlate the different adhans they choose to play, with the cities and countries on the map where they are located, this will help bring a stronger connected of place and space to the map. A possible expanded exhibition might include a projected reel with images and data sheet of the mosque, and the place from where each adhan is located, that will project onto the nearby ceiling or wall when the adhan is triggered.

I discovered that through our own interaction with the recordings of the call to prayer, as well as our physical interaction with sensors and photographs, we created an alternate reality that was actually more haunting than the reality. This was not an intended outcome however I learned through interviews with audience members of the exhibition that it was a shared experience. This may be in part due to technical limitations on my side, as I was exploring the development of this exhibition through new software tools, including Arduino and Max MSP, which I did not have a lot of previous experience with.

When the exhibition space was empty, the adhan sounded beautiful. It is only when people walk into the space that the sound becomes loud, jarring, and cacophonous. While I set out to provoke audience members into hearing the call to prayer in a new way, perhaps this project became a commentary on the role human beings play in augmenting our own and others' perceptions of what we hear. Our participation created a haunting sound, reminding us that listening isn't objective—our presence as listeners has the power to alter what we hear.

6 Discussion

6. Discussion

6.1 Section One: Introduction

6.1.1 Introduction

Comparing and contrasting these three case studies can provide insight into the role creative response can play in archiving and collections development, as well as the relationship between creative response and mediating human interaction in ethnographic research. In this chapter I will discuss key ideas that have emerged from placing these three case studies in conversation with one another. Specifically, I will discuss 1) the role and impact of creative response on intergenerational archive building, 2) the ethical considerations of the outsider-insider approach to research, 3) the role of human mediation in creative response, and 4) the role of technological mediation in creative response.

It is widely accepted that all ethnographic researchers should immerse themselves, to varying degrees, in the host community, as this helps to foster trust between the community and researcher. The question is how best to build this relationship while retaining the requisite level of objectivity. What my research aims to do is lean into this exchange of trust building, as a necessary first step in using creative response as a tool for immersion into the community. Anytime an outside observer comes into a community there is an inevitable change or disruption to that community. There is a level of interpretation inherent in all such exchanges. It is common and accepted within ethnographic practice for an observer to gain the trust and acceptance of a community;

however there has been a line drawn about the extent to which subjective experience can be a part of that interpretation.

The idea of a researcher serving as a collaborator and not as a strict observer is, on the surface, a departure from traditional ethnographic research. However, contemporary research that looks at ways digital methodologies are redefining ethnographic practices, as articulated in Pink et al. (2015) supports the idea that the researcher's role might be more expansive than strictly that of observer (p. 2). Pink et al. explore the impact of new approaches to ethnographic research design, as well as the impact of these designs on the engagement between researcher and community. They say, "Digital ethnography, if it is to be undertaken at these intersections between academic disciplines and external partners, becomes an open and flexible research design, which can be shaped in relation to the particular research questions which it asks" (2015, p. 11). Arguably, this approach to designing research allows for customization based on the evolving relationship between the research and collaboration with a given community.

One additional tension I have experienced while writing this paper, which further pushes the boundaries of the role of researcher, is the divide between the practical and theoretical realms of research. As an arts practitioner and researcher, my work considers the intersections of these two arenas, and my creative practice is often embedded in my research, as illustrated in the case studies in this thesis. My role within the communities where I conduct research is therefore that of researcher and artist, observer and participant. I will discuss here creative response as a method within ethnographic contexts that allows for the joining of the theoretical research and practical contribution.

Creative response is at the center of broader research for this thesis, which is best situated within the realm of digital ethnography, described by Pink et al., as a “...practice that takes as its starting point the idea that digital media and technologies are part of the everyday and more spectacular worlds that people inhabit.” (2015, p. 7). Being a practitioner within one’s own research has become more common in the arena of digital ethnography, and according to Pink et al., “there is increasing discussion of the digital as a field in which we practice as much as we analyse” (2015, p. 8). I will use this discussion section to look at the overlap and intersections within the three case studies, with an eye toward the role creative response plays in the development of archival material. I am particularly interested in considering the specific benefits of creative response for archiving, the challenges and limitations of the process, the benefits of creative response to the researcher and the community, and the mediation process, inherent within exhibits developed through creative response, that takes place between humans and technology.

6.1.2 Intergenerational Archive Building

This section will look at the relationship between intergenerational work that was created within the LWF and Theyyam chapters, and the ways in which simultaneously capturing subjective human experience from multiple generations enhances archival documentation and changes the reach and scope of the archive. I was in fact aiming for a creative response, which particularly in the case of Lest We Forget enabled richer interactions between generations. The work discussed in this thesis uses creative response to consider how multiple

generations can impact one another's memory, perspective, and experience of a community's cultural heritage. This merging of generational experience in the same archive allows for a representation of a community, festival, or culture that is more dynamic in its consideration of the impact change has on human experience and the evolution of culture and heritage.

The collective memory of multiple generations can reveal a more cohesive picture of an event, or a festival or tradition, as seen in the current moment in time as each generation brings a unique view and perspective to the way the documentation is constructed. The overlap and synergies that are revealed through the layering of experiences of multiple generations of Theyyam performers, for example, reveals details about the artist community that one might expect, as well as more in depth information through an historic and economic lens. This includes information about performances, face makeup, and changes over time that are ever-present for the older generation steeped in the performing art, as well as an explanation of the way that an evolving India and a dramatically changing world economy have impacted the role the younger generation plays in the family structure and therefore folklore tradition, often relocating for work, leaving a gap in younger trained performers. The details and nuances revealed through these different generational perspectives on the festival help paint a clearer image of the evolution of the festival over the past 50 years, for example moving from a small village ritual to a televised event attended by thousands, arguably provides foreshadowing into future dynamics of the festival. Each new generation's experience brings important counterpoint to the archival documentation of any other generation that might exist in a standalone capacity. In the case of the Lest We Forget project, creative response

not only gave the girls access to their parents' and grandparents' memories and experiences, but it got the girls interested in the history of a culture that primarily looks forward, toward the future. One such example was the girls' nostalgia for the old structural Volcano, now demolished, that was on the beach in downtown Abu Dhabi and which featured heavily in old family photographs. Every family seemed to have several photographs shot in front of the volcano. The girls decided to recreate a backdrop with the volcano on it that was hung in the gallery at Warehouse 421, where visitors could take pictures in front of it, in memory of the old volcano pictures. Archiving cultural heritage by engaging multiple generations of a community allows for the collection of more data in the form of stories, oral histories, and memories that when looked at collectively, provides a more robust historic picture of the community and the festival.

6.1.3 Ethical Considerations for the Outsider-Insider

Creative projects have the ability to engage people on a more subjective level than traditional observational approaches can, which leads to documentation that can capture a deeper exploration of human experience. This is where the outsider-insider dynamic plays an important role in this work. As researchers we often play the role of the outsider, which means we function as if behind a curtain or within a context where the space we leave between ourselves and those we observe creates large gaps, where translation is often problematic. These gaps can have an impact on the documentation of that community or event. By employing creative response techniques, artists and creative scholars alike can break down these boundaries, or gaps, traditionally set in place. While

maintaining the status of observer, the process of participating in this modality of research can serve to enhance more traditional research practices. This process moves the researcher from the status of outsider to one of outsider-insider. While the researcher is not a member of the community, they also do not aim to create boundaries between themselves and those who they observe and document. The observed has an impact - a resonance - on the observer, but traditional ethnographic methods seek to delay the exposure of this resonance onto the artifact that is produced as a consequence of the initial contact (e.g., a paper, a book, etc.). By allowing this resonance to emerge in the form of something that is fully perceived as subjective/creative, creative response can help to trigger a number of important elements including thought, discussions, memory, sharing.

Rather than privileging the past or present, this approach to archival documentation speaks to a continuous present, an idea introduced by Gertrude Stein in her 1926 essay, "Composition as Explanation." In her essay Stein describes a continuous present as a process of understanding things by acknowledging the connectedness between them that invariably begins again and again, and which remains the same, but is seen differently based on the lens through which different people see (Stein, 1925). When this barrier between the different ways people see things is dissolved, that which exists within becomes more porous, allowing for greater exchange and deeper understanding. This approach complements the traditional role of researcher as observer, with the goal of maintaining distance or detachment from that which we study, as it allows us to work from a broader viewpoint with a more measured perspective on that which we research.

Creative response requires that we engage with people and their experiences, and that we serve as a conduit through which community members can access feelings and memories in order to create something representative of that experience. While the aim of my work with the Lest We Forget Project was to teach the girls about digital narrative and the technicality of recorders and editing tools, the bulk of our work together relied on our ability to learn about and relate to one another's experiences. This exchange of stories and trust was a necessary first step in developing creative responses to archival material.

What remains the same in traditional ethnography and the approach I am discussing is gaining the trust of the communities with which we work. Through creativity and response that looks toward shared experiences, oral histories, digital modalities, and creative approaches to sharing and documentation, different generations are engaged to share their stories and memories playfully, honestly, openly, and with enthusiasm that is not always matched by more traditional approaches. Not unlike the differences of teaching students Shakespeare through the text, versus acting out the scenes in a stage production, collecting cultural history and heritage is a more engaging process when conducted through a creative lens.

6.1.4 Listening

The Theyyam exhibition, like the Sonic Storyboard, aims to inspire active listening within participants. People's interaction with the space did not change the soundscape in the Everyday Life exhibition; rather, the intention was for the soundscape to challenge people's perceptions, as what they are used to hearing

in Theyyam and what they heard in the exhibition were not the same. The intention was to make the soundscape somewhat jarring in a similar way to the Sonic Storyboard, so that people could decide whether or not they liked what they heard, and so that they were taken out of their familiar experience and compelled to re-see and re-hear the festival through new eyes and ears. The sounds people are familiar with hearing are often the ones we somewhat tune out or pay less attention to, while those that are different or familiar but put in a different context can shock us into observation.

What is different about these two exhibitions are the audiences, and therefore the two exhibitions were shaped differently. For the Everyday Life exhibit, the audience was made up Theyyam performers and villagers who were familiar with Theyyam. The augmentation of what the audience heard was therefore minor, in part because the audience was so attuned to the sonic material that they would perceive even the smallest change. The exhibition was more a re-composition of sound than a focus on augmentation. This was done in part because, as the person transforming the recordings, I was not comfortable dramatically augmenting the sounds, as I didn't feel I had the right as an outsider. This is in direct contrast to the Sonic Storyboard project, where the audience members were the ones affecting the sound.

The audience of the Everyday Life exhibit was made up of people who had a large stake in the project, and some of whom were upset by the minor deviations from the traditional sounds. The audience for the sonic storyboard project, on the other hand, was comprised of expatriates in the Arab world, most of whom who were not Muslims, and who did not express being upset or

offended by the augmentation they were creating. In this way, the exhibitions were very different approaches to a very similar idea.

In Theyyam, the creative response elements of the research were heavily tied to the exhibition. The Theyyam festival is of course intergenerational, in that Theyyam artists pass down their traditional art form and practice to their children through oral tradition and apprentice-like training. The exhibition and project that Dhanaraj and I worked on was interested in how using creative response to material captured within the festival could help to change people's perspective and mentality. Agitation can therefore be progress.

In Lest We Forget, the creative response was arguably the thing that allowed people to want to explore new things. It became, as well, the impetus for multiple generations to listen more closely to each other, as the personal commitment one has when empowered by the mission of producing artwork is very different from the impetus of documenting other people's experiences. For example, a woman whose daughter was heavily involved in the project agreed to comment on a photograph from their home album through a video interview where she spoke of her experience moving from Egypt to the UAE to get married and have a family. Her daughter's enthusiasm and participation ended up being contagious, and the mother found herself becoming interested in participating in the project herself. Her daughter was able to learn more about her, and vice versa. For the mother being listened to was a powerful form of validation in a culture that historically privileges the men's experiences over the women's.

In Lest We Forget, creativity was used directly to intentionally change something in order to share it. Augmenting and changing material made it something that could be preserved. However in Theyyam, the intention behind

augmenting or changing the material was to be able to create social change within a community through discomfort and de-familiarizing the material.

6.1.5 Creative Response Through Human Mediation

All three projects engage with sonic archival material, and they all aim to create sonic archival material through the process of creative response. However, the projects engage people differently with this sonic material. Here I will discuss specific differences in the role human beings played as mediators of sonic material in the Lest We Forget and Sonic Storyboard projects. The LWF project was comprised mostly of digital narratives and recordings of oral histories, while the Sonic Storyboard dealt primarily with field recordings. The main difference in the way the sonic materials were used in these two projects pertains to how they were creatively recomposed. In LWF, the sonic material was changed and recomposed through human interaction. In the examples discussed in the LWF chapter, the girls shared with one another their own experiences in the form of family histories and stories, and through the process of discussion with their peers and creative response, the girls were able to develop connections between their personal and family experiences and those of their broader community. In the Sonic Storyboard project, the participants were not able to mediate the process of creative response in the same way. Here the participants' movements in the gallery transformed the recorded sounds of the adhan; however, the participants did not have control over how that transformation occurred, as those aspects were mediated by the technology driving the exhibit. In LWF, the participants' involvement and interpretation

augmented and enhanced the stories heard by audience members attending the gallery, while in the Sonic Storyboard project, the participants movements and engagement with the gallery augmented one another's experience. However, the technology of the exhibit ultimately determined what that experience would be. Participants were augmenting the adhan through their movement in the exhibition, not because they wanted to, but because the act of stepping into the exhibition space meant they were by default participating in the augmentation.

In the LWF project, there was an active element to participation; people needed to want to be a part of it. While technology was a tool for mediation in the process—through editing software, audio recorders, and image manipulation tools—the technological influence in the exhibit was controlled by the extent that people were comfortable augmenting or changing that content. These two projects are similar in that both are responding to archival material and ending up with a sonic reference; however, they are markedly different in that the people who participated in the augmentation within the Sonic Storyboard project did not have any control over the parameters that they were augmenting, as these were pre-set.

These two projects are also similar in their use of photographs and sonic material. In the Sonic Storyboard project, photographs were used to capture people's attention and draw them into the exhibition. LWF is the same in this way, as it is an exhibition built around a photographic exhibition. The other elements of the exhibit derive meaning from the photographic collection. This is similar to The Sonic Storyboard, where the photographs were organized to capture people's interest, then a person's movement toward or away from a

photograph—because of their interest in it—triggered manipulation or changes to the call to prayer.

In the LWF project, the community was galvanized around families contributing photographs to the developing archive, which were the impetus for intergenerational conversations, as well as creative response in the form of storytelling, video making, digital narratives, painting, and the recording of oral histories. The exhibit was also organized in a way that highlighted the integral nature of the photographs. The first room of the exhibition space held a large table of photographs, which viewers could walk around and observe; however, in order to access the associated sonic materials one would need to take out a cell phone and dial the appropriate number for the associating digital narrative. In the Sonic Storyboard project, more like the Theyyam project, a person's decision to walk into the exhibition space is synonymous to engaging with the visual and sonic material simultaneously.

This element of control brings up important questions about how human versus technological mediation leaves us feeling about our ability to control the space and our involvement within it. Does technological mediation provoke discomfort or a kind of ease? Does it evoke a sense of freedom and play or a desire for more control? How do we respond in the face of technological mediation, and what do we want and/or expect from it? In Theyyam and the Sonic Storyboard, the audiences are thrown into spaces that they cannot control, whereas in LWF, the audience has more freedom to engage with the exhibit as they see fit; however, things are carefully controlled—if you pick up a telephone you get a pre-recorded voice that will not change. In the Theyyam exhibit, the radical technological augmentation made some audience members

uncomfortable, while it piqued the interest of others, such as the college-aged boys who wanted to see in detail how things worked.

To what extent does interactivity make us more (or less) comfortable with technological mediation? In some instances, like the Sonic Storyboard exhibit, audience members participated simply by entering the exhibit, and so interactivity was not something they could control. Audience members who walked into the gallery did not need to want to participate, but their very engagement with the exhibition augmented and changed the space and soundscape dramatically in a way that everybody else was affected by. However, they could become playful about it once they understood what was happening, experimenting with how their movements affected the sonic soundscape.

This kind of technological mediation highlights the impact our actions, and in some cases inactions, can have on one another; it asks us, as well, how aware we are of this impact. And if we were to go one step further, it asks what we are willing to do about it once we understand our participation, however unwittingly, in the symbiotic relationship between cultures. In the case of the Sonic Storyboard exhibit, the technological mediation of the creative response provoked people to think about how their seemingly innocent presence and “mere observation” of the call to prayer actually augmented it, calling into question not only what they were hearing, but the nature of listening and observing as well.

Similarly, we might think about the ways in which many people in the United States who believe they are merely witnessing events in the rest of the world are actually participating in Islamaphobia, whether or not they intend to, because their perspectives and opinions on the matter are sculpted by constant

images, media coverage, political campaigning, television portrayals, and messaging that is anti-Islamic. People who have assumed anti-Islamic beliefs through social conditioning do not need to push a button or dial in a number in order to perpetuate their beliefs; but rather by talking and participating in a way that perpetuates the rhetoric of the news, television, and political campaigns, they are effectively perpetuating, and in some cases, even changing the way people think about Islam and Muslims. What might change for the better if more people became aware of the ways in which their “witnessing” events through technological mediation—in this case often skewed—was actually contributing to the shaping of those events?

6.1.6 Creative Response Through Technological Mediation

One goal of all three of the projects highlighted in this dissertation was to develop a collection of archival materials, in this case largely recordings, that could be utilized by the communities where the source material originated. The Theyyam project accomplished this by giving field recordings and re-composed audio compositions from the exhibit to the Kerala Folklore Akademi, a local cultural center for all things Theyyam, to use as they see fit. These recordings were handed over with associated metadata wherever possible, including date of recording and associated Theyyam performance. Most of the audio files were handed over in .mp3 and .wav formats and all were recorded at a frequency of 44.1khz, at 24 bits. Providing these recordings to the Akademi was done with the intention that the materials should be easily accessible to Theyyam artists and members of Theyyam communities across the Northern Malabar region of

Kerala, as well as to other researchers who may contact the Akademi looking for similar recordings. The recordings were also shared with Dhanaraj for his use in additional creative projects. In the case of Lest We Forget, all recordings and digital narratives created with and for the project were uploaded to the content management system of the archive and included in the collection, with associated metadata, and a variety of quality compression formats for use within public facing exhibitions and for archival preservation.

The approach and tools used for technologically mediated works that I described in the Sonic Storyboard case study supported data collection that revealed information about the audience or users of the space that would not otherwise be known. In the LWF exhibit, this type of data was not captured, while other types were. For example, while it was possible to track the number of visitors to the photograph table who dialed in the number of an audio file and listened to it, there is no data to draw on about their experience of doing this. Whereas in the Sonic Storyboard exhibition, a record of people's movement in the exhibition was captured through an ambisonic microphone and through the data collected by way of the ultrasonic sensors. The ambisonic data could be reconfigured after the fact and spacialized in a variety of different ways to re-conceptualize and express what happened in the exhibition. A number of the parameters of the recording could be changed, including the position or location from where the recording was taken, the elevation of the microphone placement, and the presence of the recording. There is something poetic in this ability to infinitely reproduce, augment, and change a recording of an exhibition that itself focused on augmentation of recordings.

The Sonic Storyboard project is different in many ways from the Theyyam and Lest We Forget projects. A primary difference is that here I worked alone and through crowd sourced contributions, but not directly with a local collaborator as I had in the two previous projects. As a result some of the aspects of this project were arguably more raw and connected to an investigation of my own inquiries, rather than connected to or based on someone else's ideas. It also means that the presentation of the project was not mediated through the lens of a local collaborator and therefore ran the risk of being less sensitive to the needs and expectations of the local community.

6.1.7 Conclusion

Placing these case studies alongside one another allows for a closer look at the work of developing creative responses to cultural heritage, and for critical comparison in the process of doing so in three different communities. This work considers the ways in which creative response contributes to the sustainability of cultural heritage and tradition, by looking at the benefits and limitations inherent in the method of creative response. While there were challenges and unexpected outcomes, such as the discomfort my sonic augmentation created in the Theyyam exhibition, in all three cases, the creative responses ultimately created positive outcomes that traditional archiving would not have yielded. In fact, the villager's discomfort itself, in the Theyyam exhibit, serves as critical archival documentation of the subjective human experience of the Theyyam Festival. The creative response of the exhibit created opportunities for villagers and artists to contribute respond, in turn, to us. We learned as much about the

community from their participation and feedback as we did from observing the festival and making the exhibit.

This idea of capturing subjective human experience of the moment in an archival documentation, or imprinting information of the time, within the archival documentation, has always been important to archivists. This was traditionally accomplished through the use of metadata tags, or prior to computer documentation, through card catalogs and written documentation that provided important information associated with the material being archived, including dates, geographic locations, and so on. In present day, many archives employ the use of data storage tools that allow metadata to be input alongside the artifact being documented, so that a simple recall of a particular object within a collection will simultaneously show the artifact and all associated metadata that is stored within the collection.

However, it seems that a true digital imprint, a means of capturing human experiences, events of the time, and context-related information about the artifact, within the archival material itself, the time they exist, the geography and possibly topography of where they exist could all enhance the way archivists think about the relationships between the materials in their collections, as well as the reasons why and the ways in which people access those materials. Here, I am proposing the idea of the digital imprint as a resource that can supplement or perhaps at some point integrate present-day metadata approaches like hyperlinks, software forks, and uploaded files.

The concept of the digital imprint is one over arching place where critical relevant information about an object, person or moment in time can be accessed simultaneous to all other relevant information about that artifact. This would

include currently difficult to capture information like human experience, memory, influences, geography, creative ideas and practice, and relationships as it relates to the artifact in question. The digital imprint is to an object in a moment in time like a 360-degree photograph is to a place, in that it attempts to capture all the related and relevant aspects of a given moment. This is to say that the digital imprint of the same object can be different in two different geographies or two different points in time. Digital imprints can then be cross referenced to one another, helping make visible otherwise invisible inter related aspects of cultures, communities, people, and objects.

The digital imprint differs from currently used digital metadata approaches that have a standard set of fields or information that are connected to each digital file. For example this may include the size of the photograph, material of the camera equipment and print, photographers name, year it was taken, place it was taken, country it was taken, and perhaps some additional information about the subject matter of the photograph, the photographer, the place in which it was shot and the collection or periodical it was placed in. What traditional metadata does not often include, using the same photographic example from above, would be for example, the reason the photograph was taken, where the subjects in the photograph were from and why the photo was taken where it was, the relationship of the house in the background to the subjects in photo, the relationship between the photographer and subjects in photo, the photographers favorite photographer, photographic influences, other projects at the time, other photographers who were shooting the same subjects that day, who was in power in that geography at the time, what movie was showing at the cinema hall that day, and so on.

The idea being that a digital imprint with this type of information and data about a given photograph would allow for much deeper research and wider query not only about the photograph but about all elements of the moment in time in which the photograph was taken, possibly allowing for a deeper understanding of how archival materials relate to one another. A digital imprint can enable the user to make connections between the object and many relatable and timely aspects of human experience that help connect the viewer to the object. The connections made through this imprint might be somewhat similar to the way Wikipedia orients their readers to links and data for a wide variety of information connected to one particular search query.

To help further explain the concept of the digital imprint, consider the example of a photograph from the Lest We Forget exhibit. The photograph might be comprised of the photograph and all associated transformations of that photograph, including written stories about the day it was taken; paintings inspired by the photo; oral histories from the people who took or are in the photograph; responses from other members of their family, community, or outsiders about those oral histories; videos, photographs and audio recordings of the process of capturing the creative responses to the photograph; as well as documentation of the exhibit and book where the photograph is showcased. Through this process, the digital imprint of that original artifact—the photograph—now includes information collected about the human experience relating to that artifact in a particular time and place, within a particular community. The digital imprint is a framework that allows the documentation of that one photograph to reflect a wide range of information that is relevant to the photograph and which contextualizes it, in the particular moment in which the

digital imprint is made. This artifact now serves as a way of connecting all of the related and disparate elements that together help define the artifact in a particular moment in time, using human experience as the conduit for these connections.

Applying this idea of the digital imprint, we can further expand the information associated with any particular artifact by including collaborators and collaborative influences. This approach can help us better grasp the way creative trends, people, and events of the time influence approaches to creative response, as well as the intersections between these creative responses and digital media trends of the time.

7 Conclusion: Creative Response

7. Conclusion: Creative Response

7.1 Section One: Conclusion

7.1.1 Summary

In this dissertation, I bring together theoretical frameworks from a variety of disciplines in order to conduct research that draws from each discipline and has findings that live in the intersection between them. I set out to answer this question: How and to what extent can artists, who use material of expressive culture in their digital media artistic practice, play a role in the archival preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage and tradition? I used three case studies as the basis for my research and analysis, and through this research I encountered a number of problems that become relevant to answering the question.

- How and to what extent can an artist who uses materials of sensitive expressive culture in their practice play a role in the archival preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage and tradition?
- What is it that the participant observer can witness and contribute from a vantage point that is neither fully inside a culture nor entirely at an “objective” distance from it?
- How can we make an archive living?
- What is the value of engaging people in artistic response about cultural artifacts from their own community and why should artistic creation matter to the archive?

These questions became the basis for a proposed methodology of how to best conduct artistic practice using sensitive expressive culture from ethnographic research.

The ultimate aim of my work is to further the dialogue about the importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration that challenges the practice-theory divide, toward the end of greater preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage; to provide artists with a toolkit for how to ethically work with materials of cultural heritage in their artistic practice; and to make an argument about the value of community members creatively responding to artifacts, and archival materials from their own culture.

This conclusion will provide a summary of my research findings from each of the three case studies, the questions I posed in my introduction along with my answers to them now, as well as the original contributions and future implications of my work.

7.1.2 Important Findings

Each of the three case studies in this dissertation—The Theyyam festival, The Lest We Forget project, and The Sonic Storyboard project—provides a different example of how digital media art practice can be paired with ethnographic research to produce art that has importance to the preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage from that community. Here I will expand on some of the key findings from each of these case studies.

Theyyam

Working with the community in Keezhara and returning year after year has allowed me greater access to the Theyyam performers, to meet more people, and to better understand the complexity of the Theyyam festival. It has also allowed me to experiment and explore with the type of documentation that is most useful to my practice as an artist. I began with field recordings as a primary tool but have also captured photographs and video as a form of documentation to enhance my artistic practice. Dhanaraj, the visual artist I collaborated with on the Theyyam exhibition, and I have discussed future projects that bring sound, video, and visual art together.

Historically, the Theyyam festival has a lot of value to the Northern Malabar region of Keezhara; however, the artistic exhibit that Dhanaraj and I created garnered attention and support for the festival from groups throughout the state like the Kerala Folklore Akademi, who now hold all recordings I made of the festival, as well as the minister of culture from the Kerala government. The exhibit also gained the attention of newspapers and television stations. This attention speaks to the way in which an artist's work within a community can achieve a different type of coverage and reach than an ethnographer's might. Traditionally, an ethnographer conducts their research and then writes up their findings, which are to be found in a journal or a book. For an artist, their findings take the form of their artistic practice, which is intentionally shared directly with the general public, and so can have a more direct impact and on the preservation and sustainability of culture by bringing the festival into the cultural memory of the community and exhibition goesers. This collective memory of the shared experience of the exhibit can be passed on from generation to generation and

shared with neighbors in a way that cannot be replicated by one individual reading an ethnographer's essay or a family visiting a Theyyam exhibition at a local folklore museum. In this way, the artistic exhibition about the festival has helped to preserve the cultural heritage and sustain it by way of bringing it to the common people of the greater Keezhara community, the city people in Kannur where the exhibition was held, the people at the news stations and newspapers who covered the exhibition, as well as the folks on social media who follow Dhanaraj and myself on Facebook (who probably knew nothing about Theyyam, but have now seen coverage of the festival and artistic responses to it year after year on our Facebook pages). In addition, the students at colleges and universities where Dhanaraj and I teach have also learned about Theyyam through our research, artistic practice, and our sharing of our work in the classroom. I have shared videos, field recordings, and photographs from the festival, as well as my process of making creative responses with students, which necessitates a discussion, not only of the artistic approach and process I have used, but also of the communities in which I have worked, my collaborators, and details of the Theyyam festival, which they may not have otherwise known anything about.

There were several key findings of this case study. First that the *Everyday Life* exhibition was successful in that it caused agitation for members of the audience, by representing the Theyyam Festival in a non structuralist and non-linear way, through creative response. Secondly, that my role as a participant observer of the Festival impacted the ways the exhibition was received by members of the community, and that my creative approach to responding to Theyyam problematized the festival for the community in a way that Dhanaraj's

artistic work did not, because I was an outsider and my work was rooted in soundscape, an artistic medium that is unfamiliar to the members of Keezhara. This case study also revealed how the exhibition facilitated a type of role reversal, whereby empowering community members to critique the Theyyam festival and their own community, by way of critiquing the work of an outsider.

Lest We Forget

The Lest We Forget project is uniquely situated as a developing collection, which at the moment does not intend to keep the artifacts that people donate to the collection. The LWF staff documents and scans the photographs, artifacts, oral histories, paintings, and stories that people share, and then they give the originals back. This is antithetical to most traditional archives where primary source material is what is preserved. In the case of Lest We Forget, these source materials are documented, but it is the response from the community to these materials that becomes a very important part of the collection. For example, college students ask their parents and grandparents for photographs from their albums, and then ask them to share stories about the photographs. The students then document those stories, through sound recordings and/or in written form, or the students may use key elements of that story to create a sketch or a painting that is a response to the photograph based on the story, using the story they have been told as a part of that artistic process.

Through this project, Michele, the students, and I have learned a lot about the way artistic practice and digital tools and enhancement allow the artistic process to take shape and change an artifact, by turning it into a digital document or a digital artifact that can then be changed or augmented without

changing the original artifact. There is a real value to this process in that it allows for the community, from where that artifact came, to understand the artifact in a way that brings its relevance into their present every day life. We see this happen in the Lest We Forget project not only through digital scans and references that are created by the collection, but also the way those digital references are used. In the Lest We Forget exhibition, we see these digital references used in a format that allows visitors to interact, engage, and contribute with the material of the collection. One example of this is a telephone room in the exhibition where older generation Emiratis recorded telephone conversations that used to happen on home landlines, to accompany photographs of people speaking on the phone. Visitors were invited to listen to these recordings, but also to record their own memories of how they used to have or overhear conversations in their home.

One of the key findings of this case study was learning that the process of creative response to archival materials can foster intergenerational conversation, and as a result, can foster the sharing of historical cultural memory between generations that might not otherwise occur. This serves to not only bring a particular artifact into the consciousness of the younger generation who might not have been able to experience it first hand, but also allows the younger generations to become activated and involved in what might now be historical traditions of their own cultural heritage.

In the case of the UAE, over the last 50 years the country has changed so dramatically that there are many elements that were critical to the culture and identity of Emiratis that are no longer a part of the culture. For example, there are different techniques and traditional hairstyles from the 1940s that may be

nearly lost, or are no longer popular because of easy access to water for bathing, and hair products that have come onto the market. Through conversation with grandparents, some younger Emiratis have become interested in these techniques used by their grandparents, and may chose to bring them back into style. In this case the students can learn how to stylize their hair in this traditional way, the natural materials that were used to hold hair in place, and the reason the particular hairstyle was popular at the time, but did not survive the culture's rapid transformation. This process of learning about one's own cultural heritage is very different from going to a museum or looking at a web-based archive, in that it is engaged, it is participatory, and it fosters exploration and experimentation with cultural heritage, an important tool to the preservation of the heritage.

Sonic Storyboard

One of the key findings of the Sonic Storyboard exhibition is the way digital media tools can be used by artists to engage the audience in an exploration of their relationship to ethnographic material at the center of their artistic work. In the Sonic Storyboard exhibition the audience member's physical movement in the gallery changed the recordings of the call to prayer, and in so doing the audience became aware of their own relationship to the material of the recordings, the adhan, and the way their presence altered the adhan. The microcontroller and programming software platforms I utilized in this work (Arduino and Max) allowed me to create a constructed environment where I was able to place members of the audience face to face with their own

impact on a space, and by extension the consideration of our impact on the world in which we live.

The important findings of the Sound Map project pertain to the way that digital media technology allows us to uniquely engage people over distance. The primary take away of the sound map is how digital media tools allow us to, construct interfaces that are widely accessible to the audience or viewers of a collection, and broaden the viewer and contributor base of the sound map content for the collection. In an artistic arena, the sound map allows for people anywhere in the world to contribute to the website, to put their field recordings into an artistically curated collection. The artists and researchers who contribute do not need to be physically present to do this, and yet without being present they are altering and helping to curate the collection of adhans from around the world.

The tools I relied on for this project include the internet, websites that support cloud storage and streaming of audio content like Sound Cloud, social networking tools that support the dissemination of information about new sites, and analytic tools that allow the creator of a site to understand how and from where the site is being accessed. These digital media tools allow large groups of people from around the world to support the preservation of cultural heritage, and help to sustain the live recitation of the adhan from mosques around the world, by making the ability to contribute to the sound map and the ability to listen to recordings on the sound map, available to anyone anywhere in the world who has access to the internet.

7.1.3 Original Contribution through this Thesis

This dissertation considers research at the intersection of digital media studies, ethnographic research, and archival studies, and presents original contributions to each of these fields. My approach to artistic practice in digital media provided a very different entry point to both ethnographic research and considerations for how best to make living and contribute to archival collections. The major contribution of this study is an approach to artistic practice mediated by digital media technologies using materials of sensitive expressive culture, and the contributions of the resulting creative work toward the sustainability and preservation of cultural heritage and traditions.

Through the research and analysis I have conducted I have found that artists who use expressive culture in their artistic practice can play a role in sustaining cultural heritage and tradition through collaboration with the communities from where the materials originate. Through these collaborations, as highlighted in the three case studies in my research, the cultural material is disseminated more broadly than it would be otherwise, as a result of artistic exhibitions, gallery exhibits, and creative projects attracting large audiences. Artistic projects that engage communities in creative response about their own cultural heritage serve an important role in the preservation of cultural traditions within a community, as is highlighted in the Lest We Forget case study.

The process of creative response is both intellectual and creative in its nature; it is a perfect hybrid of the theoretical and practical elements of the way that we think and function as human beings. Participating in creative response to cultural artifacts from one's own community allows and enables one to connect their own experience to that of their peers, relatives, and community

members. This allows people to connect with members of their own generation and other generations around materials that are representative of their culture, and are able to connect those objects to their life in present day. The act of creative response engages people in the process of looking at their own personal history and heritage in connection to their cultural and community heritage as well as the role social, political, historical, and economic factors have played in mediating these identities.

In the introduction to this paper I raise a question that I have heard asked by archivists, and which I think my research findings and proposed methodological approach address. Their question is, “How can we make the archive living?” Making the archive living is a function of figuring out how to engage members of a particular community around archival material that has been collected about their own community. While making an archive living may sound simple, it has been a concern raised by archivists and ethnomusicologists for the past three years at the Annual meeting of the International Association of Sound and Audio Visual Archives (IASA). One proposed way to navigate this challenge, based on my research, would be to engage artists both from within the community and outside of it, to bring people together to work on an artistic project based on the artifacts and archival materials from that community’s culture and traditions. In this instance people from a given community would be asked to engage with that cultural heritage, and might be asked to contribute their own family heirlooms and artifacts of cultural heritage similarly to what we saw happen in the Lest We Forget project. People’s contributions to the archive are not something that will remain static, but rather they become a living discourse on meaning-making about their own experiences, as well as the process of engaging in the possibility

for deeper understanding of their heritage and community by looking at things from their cultural past.

The role of the artist as outsider is one I consider throughout my research. A person from outside of a community can play an important role in helping to develop projects that make an archive living in that it is often difficult to appropriately value one's own heritage. We don't always value our own cultural heritage in the same way that someone else might; we can easily take our own culture for granted when we are immersed in it. This does not mean that an outsider values another's cultural heritage more, but rather differently. One thing I learned from the Lest We Forget project is that being an outsider to an Emirati community allowed me to help the students think through the way they tell stories. Emirati culture has strong traditions of oral history and storytelling through song; however, the younger generations are not as connected to those traditions as their parents and grandparents. Being an outsider to that community allowed me to value their storytelling and the connections they made about their own experiences, in a way that they could not do for one another. I was able to encourage them to take exchanges with their family and their peers, and to include them in the creative responses.

In the Theyyam project, the role of the outsider was very different. In ethnographic research there exists the role of the outside observer, where observation is intended to be conducted from the outside, as this distance is understood to allow for a necessary objectivity when conducting research. However, artists who use sensitive expressive culture when making art, are still functioning as an outsider to a community, and yet that connection with the community is more intimate than the ethnographers'. So, in the case of the

Theyyam exhibition, I was given more leeway to express my artistic self in a way someone else might not be. I was also cautious to be ethical and considerate of the community's traditions and heritage when developing the artistic work with Dhanaraj. In that context, my role as the outsider was to be an agitator in some ways, but I was also highly deferential to the members of Keezhara, particularly the Theyyam performers, which was in line with the traditional hierarchy of the festival.

In my Review of Literature, I discuss the existing theoretical scholarly framework in archival studies that speaks to the value of art in the archive. My research further contributes to this understanding of the value of art in the archive by showing ways artistic practice can be valuable to the archives, and should be seen as such. My research proposes that the process of artistic practice contributes something to an archive, which isn't otherwise contributed. For example, when an ethnographer collects field recordings and photographs of a community during their research, that material is important to the archives as primary source material, as an archive is interested in documenting artifacts from communities in order that we can preserve them, sustain them, and remember them. What I contribute to this discussion is the suggestion that when those field recordings and photographs are transformed into a piece of art, that artwork becomes a commentary on and reflection of that artifact.

The artist creates a commentary about a particular artifact, cultural element or tradition through their particular artistic lens, which contextualizes that tradition or object in a particular moment and place in time. Creating art about that photograph or field recording allows the artist to present that object in the context of a social setting, in a world that exists in the moment that

particular piece of artwork is made. When the artistic work joins the object in the archive, the two tell a different story side by side than the object can alone. That story might be filled with details about artistic collaborations within the community, galleries, newspaper articles, and television interviews about an artistic exhibition. The ethnographer's photographs and field recordings are now inextricably linked to the dates on the newspaper articles about the exhibition developed in creative response to the objects, and the experiences of the people who attended the exhibition. The archival objects that served as the inspiration for the artistic project have now become alive within the community in a new way.

When I began this research, one of the challenges I faced was negotiating ethical standards as an artist, when using material from communities outside of my own. I pushed up against these ethical standards, because the line between ethical and unethical was not always clear-cut. One way I tackled this in the case studies I discuss was to bring the artistic projects back to the community where the materials of expressive culture originate. I engaged with community members and got their responses to my work, so I could learn what was sacred to them and gauge when my work pushed boundaries in a positive, productive way, and when I needed to rethink something.

7.1.4 Future Work

My research and practice are founded on the belief that archives are intended to be repositories or collections of material for both the general public as well as for the communities from where the materials originate. Yet often, the

communities whose heritage is documented don't always access or use the collections and might not know about them. When artists develop creative responses, especially with members of that community, that can then become a part of an archival collection, they are also creating a bridge between the community and the archive of their own heritage. This participation creates a sense of ownership by the community about collections of their cultural heritage, which is important to the mission of archives. While alliances between artists and archivists already exist, they have a long way to go before real mutual benefit will be felt. Primary source material that has been reflected upon by the community that it came from, gives important information to the archive about the materials being documented.

Artistic practice has the power and potential to situate and contextualize artifacts of cultural heritage and sensitive expressive culture within a particular moment in time. In the Theyyam case study, the sonic and visual art exhibition highlighted caste issues within a community as it was tied to the festival. The exhibition did this by immersing the audience in a sonic and visual space that created a narrative about Theyyam and caste dynamics, which was mediated by technology in order to present a representation of the festival that was focused on the tangibility and everyday-ness of the Theyyam performance artists. The exhibition, while not truly interactive in the same way as the Sonic Storyboard exhibit, was created and spacialized for a sound-square playback environment in a way that conjured movement throughout the space, mirroring performative aspects of Theyyam and the performance artists lives throughout the festival. In a traditional archival context, issues of caste marginalization might not be placed along side traditions from the festival.

Creative response as a methodology was initially developed through classes that I taught as a way of bringing artistic practice into a theoretical classroom environment, in order to fulfill a hunch that my artistic collaborator and I had. This hunch was that when students are engaging their tactile senses, and creative sensibilities at the same time, they are engaging their analytical and theoretical sensibilities—the outcome of the work they create, their thinking, and their process is going to be deeper than if they were engaging either of those reflective processes independently.

The pedagogical implications of this research are in line with those hunches. The research I have conducted in this dissertation points to the fact that when artistic practice is synthesized with ethnographic research, the end product is more robust, dynamic, and thoughtful than either the ethnographic practice or artistic practice on its own. I will continue to explore and experiment with this synthesis of arts practice and theoretical analysis in my classroom, and hope to support other faculty to do the same in their classroom context. I will also continue researching the pedagogical implications of the synthesis of artistic practice, ethnography, and the archives in order to encourage students to more deeply and holistically connect with the material that we are asking them to, and enable them to connect their understanding of the human condition to the materials they are grappling with.

I will also continue developing artistic work through creative response to sound recordings of sensitive expressive culture. In particular I am now developing projects that use digital media approaches including media archiving, techniques of sonic culture, and soundscape manipulation to further consider the methodological implications of ethnographic research on the sounds of religion,

both those that are thriving and those that are dying, and the sounds of the world ecosystems, again both those that are thriving and those that are dying. The intention of these future works is to use the methodological hybrid approaches explored in this dissertation to continue to push the boundaries and impact that digital media art and studies can have on ethnographic research, and play in our attempts to archive cultural traditions and heritage that may otherwise be lost. I am interested in partnering with communities that are in a moment of reflection about their identity, cultural heritage, and history, to develop approaches to creative response and artistic practice that captures stories and inter-generational narratives. My future research will allow me to build upon the findings of this dissertation, while furthering research that connects digital media, ethnography, and archiving to meaningfully preserve and sustain aspects of tradition and cultural heritage that are slowly disappearing.

VII. References

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Appendix A: Related Publications

"Acquisition as Appropriation: From the Parthenon to the Abu Dhabi Guggenheim," *Affirmations: Of The Modern*, Vol 4, No 1. (Autumn, 2016).

"Lest We Forget: In conversation with Susan Meiselas and Michele Bambling" *Tribe Magazine*, Issue 38. March 2016.

"Artists, Archivists, and Community," *IASA Journal*, Issue 45. October 2015. 59-61.

Rub Al Khali (The Empty Quarter), Sound Design for film by French Director Sophie Bachelier, on Artists in the United Arab Emirates. April 2015.

Kalima wa Nagham, Arabic language book authored by Nasser Isleem and Ghazi Abuhakema, Audio Book by Diana Chester, February 2015.

Everyday Life: A Repertoire of Ritual and Performance: A multimedia exhibition in collaboration with Indian artist Dhanaraj Kheezara, fusing painting, drawing and spacialized sound composition in exploration of caste marginalization in Theyyam, IMA Hall, Kannur, India. December 2014.

Adhan Sonic Storyboard, An interactive installation exploring the sonic nuance of the call to prayer, fusing digital images, recorded sound, and sensor based data collection via microcontroller, Gallery 4211, Al Ain Tower, Abu Dhabi, UAE, May 2014.

Ramsah Emirati Dialect Language Book, Co-Authored by Nasser Isleem and Ayesha Al Hashemi, Audio Book by Diana Chester, April 2014.

Appendix B: Theyyam Festival Field Notes

Theyyam Festival Field Notes: February 15th-19th 2013

Corpus of Analysis includes, field notes, photographs, and video clips.

In transit to Keezhara:

Audio recorded on iPhone

Bus to plane	4:08
On plane before take off	1:34
Calicut walk to taxi	00:37
Ambassador drive to Kannur Rail Station	3:36
A4 Platform at Rail Station	2:52
The train is coming	1:14
On Theyyashanthpur-Kannur Express	3:26
Train and Heart and Vibrations	2:19
Chat in Train	2:10

Day 1: Saturday February 15th 2013

Audio/Video/Photo Documentation:

- Audio Captured on iPhone:
 - First Walk 1:35
 - Theyyam Sounds Like Azan 4:26
 - Theyyam end of 1st performance 3:13
 - Audio captured on Sound Devices 788T with Core Ambisonic Microphone
 - T46 – Large Parade in the evening
 - T47 – Drummers in circle on field in unison
 - T48 – Fireworks
- Photos/Video

Field Notes:

Daiva Chekon:



Image B1
Morning:



Image B2

I arrived in Keezhara via Kannur rail station at 8:30am. I met Dhanaraj, Nisha, Sidu and Teju on the train at the Khozikode station, where I joined them in their car. We then travelled together for two hours to Kannur. Upon reaching the station we jumped into an ambassador taxi, and made a few stops to pick up sweets and fruit for Dhanaraj's mom, then continued on to the town of Keezhara. We reached Keezhara at 9:30am. We showered, ate lunch and headed to the Hindi Temple in Keezhara, which was a 2-minute walk through the woods, away from Dhanaraj's childhood home, where we were all staying.

The Keezhara temple is known as a Goddess Bhagavad/Kali temple. We reached the temple around 11:30am and met with the temple elders. We paid our festival fees, amount of contribution is voluntary, I contributed 500 INR as a donation to the temple for the Theyyam. Though the Theyyam families incur much of the responsibility for the festival, the temple provides the grounds, and temple minders, as well as provides lunch every day of the festival, gratuitously to all who would like to attend. There are volunteers from the town who help to prepare large quantities of food to help feed all festival-goers. The back of the temple is setup with tables and chairs, and there is a lunch line where you grab your plate and get food placed on it. At the conclusion there was a wash and rinse station where all should wash their own plates.

We then met with the men who are a part of the theyyam families. As they all speak Malayalam and I do not it took some time to communicate. Luckily one of the sons of one of the elders of the Theyyam family, spoke Hindi as he had worked in Delhi for ten years, and returned only recently to fulfill his responsibilities within the Theyyam. I was able to speak with him in Hindi about a bit, though he was of course most interested in knowing about me, where I was

from, my marital status, etc. It was interesting however to learn that many of the key family members and participants of the Theyyam festival in Keezhara including Theyyam families and musician families, often leave the town to pursue other careers. Many of them end up returning to participate and prepare for Theyyam.

I found this dynamic mirrored in the community members at large.

Dhanaraj, who is in his early forties, and who has lived in Bangalore for more than ten years, enjoys returning for Theyyam each year, in part because many of his friends who also work outside of their hometown, return for the festival. The town comes alive during the festival, with many town folks who return from jobs far away, as far as the emirates, and of course within India itself, all to see one another, to enjoy their childhood town and to participate in Theyyam.

Dhanaraj's contemporaries would often stay up through the nights, meeting at the temple and talking and catching up, while the Theyyam families prepared for the next character.

At 1:30pm we attended the Theyyam Thottam of the day. Thottam is an introduction of the Theyyam story that will be performed later that day. In particular Thottam of each day of the festival is often the reading of the final Theyyam story that is performed on the final day of the festival. Images for this are captured on the iPhone.

****Nap and Lunch at Dhanaraj's Childhood House****

Evening:

Around 6:30/7pm crowds began to gather on the road between the main temple and the smaller temple down the road. Young Children lined up and

carried fruits through the procession, a drumming group lead the way and many people holding umbrellas were creating a passageway for the artists within the parade. The two main characters ran up and down the passageway dancing and performing all the way down the road.

Meanwhile large stacks and piles of hay were being burnt to the ground all around the crowds. Some of these huge bundles of hay and straw were placed erect in the middle of an empty field, and then lit, creating an illuminating glow that burned for a good half hour, and spread ambers throughout the festivities.

The procession moved into the field adjacent the main temple, where the two main characters were completely surrounded by piles and piles of tender coconuts, bananas on their stalks, baby jackfruit, and other seasonal fruits. The two Theyyam sat in special wooden Theyyam seats as people fed them tender coconut water, etc.

The attention of the festivities then shifts to the Shivaji Malam, which takes place in the back of the open field adjacent the temple, where drummers and other instrumentalists perform awesome rhythm pieces along with coordinated dancing, there are probably 20-25 drummers, and they are surrounded by a circle of festival attendees.

The night concludes in this fashion and ultimately comes to an end with a thirty-minute long, and very loud, fireworks celebration, which was set off from the river nearby. The fireworks had an interestingly rhythmic continuous present about them. There was then a midnight and a 2am Theyyam but I went to sleep and did not attend these, as I was too exhausted.

Day 2: Sunday February 16th 2013

Audio/Video/Photo Documentation:

- Audio Captured on iPhone:
- Audio captured on Sound Devices 788T with Core Ambisonic Microphone
 - T49 - Thottam where they crack the coconut and face the temple
 - T56 - 1st Take of Evening Theyyam
 - T65 – Peanut Man/Ambient Noise and Face Painting of Characters
 - T66 – Dhanaraj Taking Photographs
 - T67 – Kids buying toys from the toy kiosk
 - T68 – Ankle and leg bell jewelry go on theyyam character
 - T72 – Tiger and man struggle
 - T73 – More tiger and man struggle
 - T74 – Even more tiger and man struggle
 - T75 – Brief bit at the end with amazing Theyyam flute
 - T77 – Before dinner at Dhanaraj's childhood house, TV/talking/playing and Theyyam is in the background.
 - T81 - Chitchat and the late run to mountain.
 - T82 - the pre-Theyyam drumming
 - T84 - day two late night Theyyam.
- Photos/Videos

Field Notes:

9:30am Wake-up

11:30am Nap

12:30pm Theyyam Thottam

Lunch and rest

5:00pm Back to temple grounds for Vellatam prep, face make-up costumes

6:30pm Vellatam character does tiger/man dance.

8pm Back to House for dinner and rest

12am Back to temple for Theyyam

2am back to house for rest.

Morning: Puliyoor Thottam



Image B3

Afternoon: Puliyoor Kannan Vellatam



Image B4

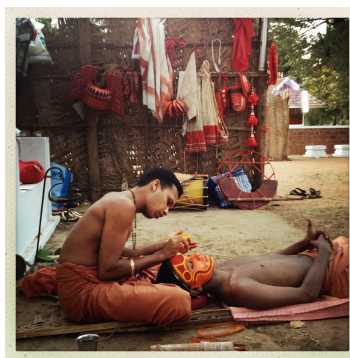


Image B5

Evening: Puliyoor Kannan Theyyam



Image B6



Image B7

Evening:

12:30pm-2am Man still struggles with Tiger but with a new heard dress and face make-up. Men from the village rn to the top of two of the towns four hills with burning bunches of fronds, racing to be the first to reach back to the temple. Once they reach back the Theyyam is there with headdress on and tail (of tiger) in hand. All the burning bundles were thrown into the middle of the ground in front of the temple and the Theyyam dances around the burning matter, to the drumming. Audio Track T81 captures chitchat and the late run to mountain. T84 is day two late night Theyyam. T82 is the pre-Theyyam drumming.

Theyyam Ideas for Art from field journal

Look at photographs from Theyyam Day two especially those from the early evening. Consider the pics of the face painting the characters, the dressing of characters and dancing, and recognize how nervous the kid is who is playing the character. Try to develop a soundscape that follows his anxiety and maps it. Or consider the process and how to develop it.

Day 3: Monday February 17th 2013

Audio/Video/Photo Documentation:

- Audio Captured on iPhone:
- Audio captured on Sound Devices 788T with Core Ambisonic Microphone
 - T87 – Ladies chanting before sunset
 - T88 – Conclusion of ladies singing
 - T89 – Conversation with local media guys about my microphone
 - T90 – When fishermen bring fish to temple
 - T91 – Conversation before Theyyam about my wedding.
 - T92 – Pre evening Theyyam Recording
 - T93 – Even more ambience
 - T94 – Evening Theyyam starts across the street
 - T95 – Evening Theyyam
 - T96 – When fire is brought back from the mountain
- Photos/Videos

Field Notes:

Vettakarumakkan Thottam



Image B7

Vellatam Vettakarumakkan



Image B8



Image B9

Theyyam Vettakarumakkan



Image B10



Image B11

Evening:

I went to sleep at 2:30am after the previous evenings festivities. I woke up at 9:30am after most of the house and already been away for at least 2 hours. The small amount people sleep here amazes me. But I guess it's like being in a cabin in the woods on vacation and all of your relatives who you are happy to see, showing up at odd times to drop in and hang out. Meanwhile I have developed a cold, since the first day, and my nose has been running like mad, not to mention a slightly dry and itchy throat. The good news is that it's manageable, despite blowing my nose into anything near by, and today Nisha and Dhanaraj

will go to the next town over to fetch some supplies including Vitamin C tablets for me.

So back to Theyyam. Today the schedule will change a bit from previous days. Around 12-noon there will be the Thottam, which has happened every day since we arrived. The thottam is basically a Ritual song, where the artists play a drumbeat in an interesting and varied way, and then at full speed recite an oral tradition of the Theyyam story. There are elders from the performance family who will stand by to ensure that the oral tradition story is properly recited, and they will jump-in and add lines if necessary. The elders will also step in for the characters, if they need a break, or to take rest. Sometimes the junior family member has not memorized the thottam story, and so a senior member will take over for part of the story that the junior member, often their son or nephew, has not yet learned.

We attended the Thottam at 12:3pm. Took images of coconut smashing after Thottam and took recordings of chatting. Dhanaraj has pics of me with school kids and his best friends. We had poa (food) at the temple after thottam. Thottam is basically the story of what is going to happen that day. It is all oral and there is no written documentation that people here know about. The story is in Sanskrit and very few people can understand it unless they have really studied with the Theyyam families. Dhanaraj may know the stories from years of listening.

Theyyam is fundamentally, it seems, about community. Theyyam in Keezhara is a ritual tradition that maintains Hindu devotional practices to the land, to fire, to water, and overall to the earth. The story of the Tiger Theyyam, as Nisha tells is, is that long back when people found Keezhara, they wanted to

settle here, to build huts, and to farm, etc. Now the place is a town of 1500 families, surrounded by tall hills and by a river on one side. When the people came, they began to build and settle and they disrupted the animals and natural ecosystem of the area. The tigers became angry and there was a clash, whereby the people fought the tigers and it was awful. From that point forward legend has it that the people conducted ritual prayer and celebration by way of the Theyyam festival. Theyyam in Keezhara is the people asking the tigers for permission to co-exist on their land.

Today there is another Theyyam about fish. Apparently Theyyam is the one time, when people from all different castes will come together at the main temple. Theyyam brings all of these people together, in a way nothing else in their daily lives will. The fishermen come from a particular caste and they will participate in a Theyyam today. All day these fishermen have been at the river, trying to fish for this one type of silver fish that swims near the surface. No one else will fish in the river today. From early in the morning the fishermen will be fishing and praying in the river, in order to catch enough fish to give to the gods at the evening Theyyam.

Another caste that participated heavily in the Theyyam of the past two days is a family from a different caste who grow a devotional coconut tree. This tree is a special coconut tree.

Chai Break...

Not just anyone can climb or cultivate the coconut tree, and the coconuts are only used for devotion and as an offering to the gods. The person who cares

for and pays tribute to the tree will eat only pure foods, and will then fast after which they will climb the coconut tree and bless the fruits. This will happen regularly for temple related functions, worship, festivals, etc. Someone from the coconut family will participate in Theyyam and his friends and family will come to Theyyam to support him. Similarly the fishermen will come and be supported by their friends and family. (Tribe and clan) And the men of the hiss will come and so on.

Day 4: Tuesday February 18th 2013

Audio/Video/Photo Documentation:

- Audio Captured on iPhone:
- Audio captured on Sound Devices 788T with Core Ambisonic Microphone
- Photos/Videos

Field Notes:

Early Morning, 5am, Thondachan Buddha father with white lips.



Image B12



Image B13

Evening 5pm-9pm Shiva/Parvathi Theyyam and a large festival with a large crowd.

Male Theyyam: Keshetrapalam

Female Theyyam: Thayar [Paradevather] mother goddess (this is also the name of the Keezhara Temple)

Day 5: Wednesday February 19th 2013

Audio/Video/Photo Documentation:

- Audio Captured on iPhone:
- Audio captured on Sound Devices 788T with Core Ambisonic Microphone
- Photos/Videos

Field Notes:

Early Morning 5am-6am

2 Super Tall Costumes in main area. First there is a trek where the fish was brought, then a while later total chaos ensues and the two Theyyam dance in the main area near the temple. Then they walk to the other side of the temple.

New Information Learned:

All Thottams are reading one story, which is the story of the fourth day's evening performance with Kesthrapalam and Thayaparadevatha. They are really telling the story of Thayaparadevatha who is the Mother Goddess, and the Keezhara temple is her temple. The thottam is the story of who she is, where she is from, how she came to this place, etc. The Thottam also gives different names for the Mother Goddess. Theyyam is also performed exclusively by the backwards caste. The story says that Daiva, the god, was in human form-a backwards caste person who was killed by a forward caste person. When Daiva became a god she/he took revenge on the forward caste. For this reason Theyyam is performed always by the Backwards caste.

Appendix C: Lest We Forget Workshop Curriculum

Lest We Forget Workshop on Documenting Oral Histories and Soundscapes

Diana Chester

I will conduct six, daylong workshops over a six-week period, allowing the participants an opportunity to work on assignments and audio collection between workshops. Interspersed within these workshops I can hold periodic critiques.

Sound Workshop:

These workshops will provide participants with an overview of the role sound can play in the Lest We Forget archive and exhibitions. I will share examples of community projects and sound art initiatives to help provide a framework of understanding, as well as prime participants to generate and explore new ideas for incorporating sound recording into the upcoming exhibitions. I will conduct hands on trainings of best techniques and practices for recording sound, and using field recorders, including interview and field recording skills. Participants will explore photographs and archival objects already in the collection and explore new ways to sonically represent these objects. They will use the time between workshops to collect sound recordings from their families, the community, and the environment.

Exhibition Workshop:

Sound Map: A sound map embedded on the project website would allow for the collection, organization, retrieval and metadata tagging of all recorded audio related to the project. This would be a visual representation of all places within the Emirates from where sound recordings are collected and recoded. Starting this as soon as possible

would allow for a central repository for all recorded sound generated within the workshop as well as outside, for the purpose of archive as well as for easy retrieval and use within exhibitions. The sound map can ultimately be expanded to support audio upload from members of the community, via the website or a phone application. (I am including a link to the MOMA's recent share your silence sound map as a reference to this type of work. http://www.moma.org/share_your_silence)

In-Exhibition Recording Stations: These stations that will exist as a part of the exhibitions, will allow visitors to the exhibition space to contribute stories and comments to the sound collection of Lest We Forget. These sound recordings can be stories of particular photographs or archival objects, or of unrelated moments. These recordings can then be added to the Lest We Forget Archive and be in support of soundscapes of future project related exhibitions.

Sonic Connections between Exhibitions (Shadows of Exhibitions): It could be interesting to capture sound recordings of each exhibition to include in future exhibitions of Lest We Forget. This process would capture the interaction of the community with the archival objects on display, and in so doing capture a moment in the living history of the UAE, a moment of reflection on the past. It could be very interesting to layer soundscapes of interaction from each exhibition into the next exhibition, as a starting place for a point of overlap between the content and subject matter of each exhibition. Perhaps a space in each exhibition could be dedicated to this idea

Day 1 Wed., Oct. 29	<u>Morning Session</u> Introduction to sound workshop Exploration of ideas for incorporating sound recording into LWF exhibitions Lets think about the relationship of form, visual and sonic.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fitting sound to image – example from Travelling Cortex Website – pairing something with imagery even after the fact. Looking at what the image is/doing/conveying and finding a sonic environment that matches that. This may not be the first thing that comes to mind. <p>Visualization Exercise: Think of an image, once you have it in your mind recreate it. You can draw it or describe it. Do that for 5 minutes. Now work with a partner and describe your images to one another. Now your partner should write down three ideas for sonic accompaniment to your image and then hands it back. You should then review the three suggestions and identify why one of them would work best. (What aspects of that image are you highlighting? What in that photograph do you want someone to see? Is it the clothes, the buildings, etc? – We need to think about how the sound is creating a harmonious accent to the image.) The sound is present for a reason it is supporting the telling of a story.</p>
	<p><u>Afternoon Session</u> Best practices and techniques for recording sound Interview and field recording exercises</p> <p>Hand out Zoom Technical Data Sheet with some very basic details of recording and interviewing for best quality. Students will need to explore and experiment with these tools, partnering and doing exercises, etc.</p> <p>HW Assignment: Record 3 things. I want you to record your own thoughts, descriptive or otherwise about a piece in the exhibition. Record an interview of a friend or family member telling a story, or recalling a moment in time related to an image. Record an ambient sound from your surroundings that seems to have a narrative connection to an image from the exhibition.</p>
Day 2 Wed., Nov. 5	<p><u>Morning Session</u> Critique of collected sound clips Color Palette Underlying Ambient Sounds</p>
	<p><u>Afternoon Session</u> Introduction to sound maps Exploring how sound maps can be developed for LWF Sound map techniques</p>
Day 3 Wed., Nov. 12	<p><u>Morning Session</u> Critique of sound map assignments</p>
	<p><u>Afternoon Session</u></p>

	Work on sound maps
Day 4 Wed., Nov. 19	<u>Morning Session</u> Critique of sound map assignments
	<u>Afternoon Session</u> Introduction to in-exhibition sound stations Exploration of in-exhibition sound stations for LWF
Day 5 Wed., Nov. 26	<u>Morning Session</u> Critique of in-exhibition sound station assignments
	<u>Afternoon Session</u> Introduction to sonic recording of exhibitions Exploration of how sonic recordings could be developed for LWF Exercises in sonic recordings
Day 6 Wed., Dec. 3	<u>Morning Session</u> Critique of sonic recordings for exhibitions
	<u>Afternoon Session</u> Exploration of integrating these sound recording elements for LWF exhibitions, archive and website